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FLOWER-O'-THE-CORN

WORKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

The Stickit Minister.
The Raiders.
The Lilac Sunbonnet.
The Playactress.
Bog Myrtle and Peat.
The Men of the Moss Hags.
Cleg Kelly.
The Grey Man.
Lads' Love.
Little Anna Mark.
Lochinvar.
The Standard Bearer.
The Red Axe.
The Black Douglas
Love Idylls.
The Silver Skull.
The Dark o' the Moon.
The Firebrand.
The Stickit Minister's Wooing.
Kit Kennedy.
Cinderella.

Sweetheart Travellers.
Sir Toady Lion.

FLOWER-O'-THE-CORN

BY

S. R. CROCKETT.

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FLOWER-O'-THE-CORN.

CHAPTER I.

FRANCES.

"A YOUNG man," said my Lord Duke to Maurice Raith, "is never the worse for being like his neighbours. He ought to take his tone from his time. Let him be no precisian, no enthusiast, no stander upon punctilio, but rather a man of affairs." Here the Duke paused, and his fingers tapped the folding-chair meditatively. "Once, sir, there was a great lady, very fair and very gracious, who assisted myself with a considerable sum of money. I never found myself any the worse for it. No! not a whit the worse—in pocket, richer. In reputation, well—I had a sword at my side. So, Captain Maurice, you have the figure, you have the dash—as far as mere man may judge, you have the face. Do not by over-niceness miss your chances. Receive it from one who knows. Take your day! Take your day! Man is young but once, remember. The time will come all too soon when nectar and ambrosia shall have lost their relish. Kiss, my lad, while you have kissing favour. For by-and-by fair maids will begin to look over your shoulder at the lad who comes up behind you. Aye, all too soon! All too soon!"

So to Captain Maurice Raith (late of my Lord

Cutts's regiment) spake his newly-nominated Grace of Marlborough. The allied troops lay on the green braeface just over the Castle of Crèvecœur. The Meuse flowed placidly beneath like a river seen in a dream. There were six secretaries writing hard at it in the next room, but for all that my lord was finding time to bestow the advice of experience upon his favourite aide.

The mind of the great captain was far from easy.

Nimeguen was still a cause of anxiety. Among themselves the Dutch still disagreed—as usual. Blenheim lay far to the south, a peaceful hamlet, dreaming among its vines, and one well-bred youth, in Mr. Maurice's opinion, occupied a position of more importance in the movements of the allied armies than Eugene the Prince, and a dozen Dutch generals with names that sounded like "Kinkhost."

So, with these words ringing in his ears, and in his heart a great willingness to follow his Chief's precepts, Maurice Raith took his way without the bounds of the camp. It was harvest time, which in that country happens in the high flood-tide of the July heats. All Flanders and Picardy were veritable Fields of the Cloth of Gold, in which blue blouses swung and swayed, and scythes flashed circlewise in the high bold sunshine.

It was thus that he first saw her, blue and white among the gold, and ever after in his heart of hearts he called her, like those others, "Flower-o'-the-Corn." Common folk in England call a certain gay, laughing, defiant bloom "Cornflower." In France little children leap up and shout aloud, "Bluet! Bluet!" when they catch sight of it. For it is a precious thing to them. And Maurice Raith, who in answering my lord's letters had a genius for finding the right word,

knew at once that for this girl whom he met among the harvest fields there was no other name possible but just "Flower-o'-the-Corn." So Flower-o'-the-Corn she was till Time grew old.

It was the age of the Grand Louis—the Fourteenth of the name (Louis the least of all great kings and great men), and question and answer were still quick and straight as the give-and-take of sword-play. That is, save about the Court of the King, where all things grow naturally crooked as the head of a thorn stick that is cut from the hedge-root to fit the hand of him who cuts it.

But of this pride of life in high places we shall see little, having for the most part to do with the living and dying of poor men embattled against the powers of this world, against spiritual wickednesses in high places—together with the strange ever-new to-and-fro of life—and especially with what men will do for love, each according to his spirit and his understanding of the meaning and inwardness of the word. Such is our preamble.

Flower-o'-the-Corn stood up, her hands clasped lightly behind her. There was a bunch of blossoms between them which she had just gathered, and she stopped short in the song she was singing—as a bird pulses out the gladness of its heart and the vivid brevity of life. Maurice thought that he had never seen so fair a thing—no, not in the dreams of the night—as this maid who fronted him suddenly among the waving cornlands of the Meuse valley.

A low white horizon, pearl-grey almost to the zenith, the heat of an early autumn throbbing almost audibly through it, the hum of bees languid on the ear. It was, as I say, July, and the Duke was just settling down for the second time in front of that

famous town of Namur, the strongest fortress of all those Lowlands Low, to which the folk of every country in Europe come as to a cockpit to arrange their quarrels and to fight their battles. For these are the things that make the flat lands famous—to wit, Flemish mares, Dinant copper-workers, ugly women, and the finest battlefields in the world.

Yet nothing was less in the mind of Maurice Raith than maidens fair or maidens Flemish, as he strolled out into the cornfields to cool his brain after toiling all the morning writing the Duke's letters and listening with one ear to the great Captain's advice. For my Lord Marlborough had taken a fancy to the young man, and so for the most part kept him hard at work, while he permitted the gold-barred ornamentals of his staff to disport themselves in Brussels along the shady side of the Grande Place, or to ogle the maids of the city from under the lacework turrets of the Town Hall.

So it chanced that, in a field a mile or two beyond the limits of the camp, Maurice Raith, sauntering heart-free, suddenly heard, as it were, the carolling of a bird. The road in which he stood was sunk a little below the surrounding fields, as is the wont of the provinces of Ardennes—the banks steep and of crumbling yellowish ochre, with dark green plumes of broom at the top, feathering over and making a shadow pleasant to the wayfarer all the high summer. Here it was that he heard the sweet lilt of a girl's voice singing as to herself.

Quick at the sound Maurice sprang at the steep face of the bank as he would have done at an entrenchment. With one impetuous movement he burst through the broom, and lo! he stood stone-stricken in sudden amazement. For Flower-o'-the-Corn had come into his life, and he could never be the same

man any more. He had a slight chillish feeling along his spine as if he had been cut in two by some fairy sword of sharpness.

For, indeed, she was like a flower—this girl. She had the dewy freshness, the lissom side sway, the dash of vivid colour (which was her mouth) of some tall poppy or pomegranate flower seen under a bright sky. Yet there was nothing coquettish about Flower-o'-the-Corn—serene sweetness and simplicity rather, eminently virginal. She had eyes that varied from dark hazel to sapphire blue, and from azure back again to a mysterious sea-violet, according to the sky that shone above them and the mood that moved behind them. But her mouth was her greatest beauty. Not at all a reposeful mouth, rather one constantly flitting from expression to expression, pleading, petulant, disdainful, forgiving, all in the compass of twenty seconds—a mouth, too, that disclosed witching glimpses of pearly teeth, white as milk, closely arrayed like some masterpiece of the jeweller's art.

And when she smiled (which upon the present occasion she did at his discomfiture), it seemed to the young man like the sun breaking through an April cloud. She wore a rough country hat of naturally coloured straw on her head, set a trifle saucily, and her hair beneath it was of the colour of the ruddy parts of Indian corn, with quick wilful lights of red gold and darker shadows of nut-brown running through it. Flower-o'-the-Corn was not tall, but she gave the impression of tallness. Slender, graceful, dainty, a willow by the watercourses, a lissom-stemmed lily that had somehow blushed rose-red. Such was Flower-o'-the-Corn among the daughters.

But it is all in vain. No pen could write down, no tongue express the peculiar and invincible charm

of Mistress Frances Wellwood, sole daughter of Mr. Patrick Wellwood, chaplain to Ardmillan's regiment, in the service of the Queen of Great Britain, France, and Ireland. It is hardly fair to say that the young man was struck. Rather he was buffeted. Nor did this do him any harm, for he was a youth of some experience, this same Maurice Raith, as befitted an officer and a gentleman on the personal staff of my Lord Marlborough. No stranger was Captain Raith to the whimsies of court dames and ladies of honour, fully alive to the fact that there were wives of rich ornaments of great City companies, who were willing to bestow embroidered suits and jewelled sword-hilts, all for the favour of a little escort duty on fine Sundays after Mr. Richard Davies or Dr. Henry Sacheverell had preached in St. Paul's or Crutched Friars. Moreover, my lord did not encourage simpletons about him, never having felt himself any the worse of my Lady Cleveland's early bounty, the proceeds of which he had locked away so securely in Lord Halifax's annuity.

Yet, when all was said and done, a forth-looking, honest, passably virtuous youth was Master Maurice Raith, brevet Captain and acting private secretary on the staff of my Lord Duke before the defences of Namur, about which the river Meuse fetches a peaceful compass, as becometh a river of the Lowlands Low.

"What is your name?"

"Frances. And yours?"

"Maurice."

There was the inevitable pause as they looked at each other, blushing with beautiful unanimity. Surnames were not asked for, somehow. Flower-o'-the-Corn fingered a saffron and purple Marguerite,

pulling the petals slowly from their centre pincushion. The two had turned instinctively, and were walking down the slope away from the camp. Frances could not tell why—indeed, she did not know of it till afterwards. Maurice Raith switched the broom with his cane, and searched his empty brain for something to say. His usual easy volubility had strangely deserted him. He knew that a compliment would seem incredibly empty even before it was uttered. He felt that this girl was somehow different from all others, and that his experience of court ladies and city dames would not help him in the least here. He had an odd sense of being (by an inversion of the proverb) a swine introduced to a trough of pearls—an embarrassing business for the swine.

Yet at last he found words.

"Is it safe," he said, softly, "that you should wander thus far from the camp, and alone?"

He seemed suddenly to assume the right to inquire. A certain brotherly instinct stirred within him, mixed with something else—the intuitively superior attitude of the untrammelled male whenever it becomes protective.

"The camp is dangerous," he went on, with some eagerness, "the new levies, the Badeners, the wild tribesmen from the edge of Styria——"

She cut him short.

"Do you know Ardmillan's regiment?" she asked, sweetly enough.

"Know it?" he smiled back at her, "am I a Scot, and not know Ardmillan's regiment?"

"Then you will understand this also," she said, "that it is 'God pity him who meddles with Frances Wellwood to her hurt!'"

"That may be true," he persisted, "but the evil

might be done—done quickly, and vengeance afterwards were but a poor thing. You must take care—I pray you bide nearer home. In these stormy times——"

"Then we had better turn now," she interrupted, "for we are walking straight away from the camp."

"But you are under my escort—I am the General's aide—a fellow-countryman—in fact, Maurice Raith!"

The young man was at that age when his own name seemed a passport to him. In spite of his experience he still took himself very seriously.

"My friend," she said, "neither does my father permit me to wander without the weapons of the flesh. And some skill to use them."

She slid her hand behind her, and lo! as in a conjuring trick there were a brace of pistols in her pretty little hands. In a moment she had returned them. She bent slightly, lifted her foot, seemed to touch her ankle, and a "skean dhu" glittered between her fingers.

"Will that do?" she smiled up at him, still stooping a little, "or must I produce a battery of artillery? Say the word, sir. I am a battalion of infantry, a squadron of cavalry, and a park of artillery all in one——"

"You are a very foolish girl!" said Maurice, sententiously, and with the loftiest kind of disdain, for he felt that he was being played with, and did not like it.

"Then," she turned away at right angles, "you are much too grand a person to waste your time in talking to silly girls. I wish you a good afternoon! I will show you it was true about the cavalry, at any rate."

She hailed a passing orderly, who was taking an

officer's horse to a convenient swimming-place on the Meuse side.

"Whose beast is that?" she demanded, curtly.

"Major North's, mistress," said the man.

"Bring him here; I will ride him back into camp. This gentleman says that it is unsafe to walk outside alone!"

The soldier did as he was bidden, without a word. It was evident that he knew the girl perfectly. She mounted easily, just touching the orderly's outstretched fingers. Maurice Raith stood gaping.

"Good-bye," she cried, arranging her skirts; "run away and see that the General's letters are prettily copied or you will be whipped. And never waste your time on silly girls. It is a habit that may grow on you!"

She waved her hand and was gone.

Maurice Raith stamped his foot. He was morally certain that the soldier-servant laughed on the lee side of that horse. He could hear the frank silvery trill of Frances Wellwood's mirth. He resolved that he would not think of her as "Flower-o'-the-Corn" any more. And, as is well known, resolution is a fine thing in such circumstances.

CHAPTER II.

The Chaplain of Ardmillan's Regiment.

Nothing could have been more brilliant than the camp of the allies before Namur, when the motley hosts which conquered Tallard at Blenheim were gathering for the fray. Yet so accustomed was Frances to the sight that she only glanced up occasionally when the buff-and-blue of her own regiment of Scottish foot crossed the road or stood grouped in argument at an inn door. Away yonder rode General Lumley in command of the Scots Greys, with a brilliant staff about him, but Frances merely nodded pleasantly to one or two of the officers of the staider sort who came over of an evening to talk strategy and the Divine Decrees with her father. Then came the press again—Wurtemburger light horsemen, gold-banded and fretful like wasps, blue Franconian hussars, their boots glittering with broad silver bands at the knee and ankle. Anon appeared a cluster of fierce moustache-twirling Croats, almond-eyed and milk-toothed, spitting strange oaths over their shoulders at huge brawny Pomeranian privates, stolidly pushing through the ruck, four abreast, placid and impervious to mere noise as their own bullocks. Never such a host gathered together, and never so strange a place for mortal maid to make her home in.

Yet through the Babel of tongues, the broad give-

and-take of compliments in a score of languages, Flower-o'-the-Corn moved easily and placidly, smiling sweetly down from the tall horse of Major North. She sat him bare-backed, but as if on an easy-chair, one little white hand laid lightly on the mane, and her eyes roving hither and thither over the ranged tents and further afield to the long white lines of the city fortifications, from which came ever and anon the dull reverberation of a heavy gun or an upward burst of white smoke as a mortar was discharged.

Many men looked at her—they had not been men else, but the hasty gibe in rough camp English, learnt in the trenches and bandied in whispers from post to post, was hushed by the quick elbow of a comrade.

"The Scots priest's daughter, beware! Her father has the evil eye—she, the gift of tongues. Once only Black Kessel of Taxis spake roughly to her, and his tongue clave to the roof of his mouth. On the third day he died—as it were in the flames of hell-fire!" This was no ill repute to have in such an unruly army, but when she neared her own quarters Flower-o'-the-Corn had a still better safeguard.

From out of the opening of a narrow street came a detail of Ardmillan's regiment walking with the perfectly-drilled Scottish swing. They were on fatigue duty, and each carried a mop and bucket, but for alignment and simultaneousness of movement it might have been a Field-Marshal's parade. And as they passed Frances Wellwood their chins went up and their hands with one simultaneous unanimous gesture followed the beautiful movements of the military salute. Flower-o'-the-Corn did not smile. She responded to the honour as an officer would have done. It was her unquestioned right. She had been accustomed to it ever since she could trot about barracks

and cling to the musket-butts of the soldiers on guard.

In all that regiment of grim Presbytery men, the lees of the old Covenanting companies who had fought under Cleland at Dunkeld, and campaigned with Shields in Barbadoes, there was not one who would not have died for her. And Frances Wellwood knew it, just as well as that she breathed, and it seemed as natural a thing to her. She counted the adoration of men as her daily bread, or the breathing of the clean caller air—in the which lay her safety. What, she said to herself, was one—aye, even Master Maurice Raith, secretary to the General, among so many ?

Suddenly she called upon the soldier-servant to halt.

" Thank Major North for the use of his beast ! " she said ; " tell him Frances Wellwood said so ! "

She smiled as she had spoken, like a princess. The soldier, a man of Ingolsby's Fusiliers, drew himself erect as if he had been praised by his officer on parade, saluted, and was gone.

It was in front of a little whitewashed, red-tiled Flemish house that Frances had slid easily and lightly from her horse. Under the porch, vine-covered in broad unequal patches, stood an old man, tall and spare, his black cocked hat in his hand. He was in talk with a younger man, though one already grizzled and browned with service. As the elder man gesticulated with the cocked hat, he bent his head this way and that in the vehemence of argument, till presently half-turning as the shadow of the girl fell on the white path, he showed that one of his beautiful brown eyes squinted most alarmingly, or rather (as it appeared) the right eye behaved normally, while the left turned every way in its socket as if wholly independent of the will of its owner. But Frances was far from paying

any attention to this. She ran impulsively to the elder man, and without noticing his companion she cast her arms about his neck and kissed him, in Continental fashion, on both cheeks.

"Frances! Frances!" said the minister, disengaging her gently, "will you never learn manners? Do you not see that I am presently in colloquy with my colonel, Sir Archibald Ardmillan? It is an affair of the regiment. I pray you go in and leave us, Frances!"

"Indeed," said his daughter, "I will do nothing of the sort. If it is an affair of the regiment, you have your study, Colonel Ardmillan has his orderly-room and his quarters. This is at present my front garden, and if you have anything to say that I may not hear, there is a gate leading out of it. But if Sir Archibald——"

The grizzled, shortish man laughed—a bachelor's easy, tolerant laugh.

"Your daughter is right, chaplain," he said. "My Lord Duke said nothing of concealing the matter from her. She may as well know soon as syne, as the Ayrshire folk say!"

The old man frowned, with, perhaps, more zea than sincerity upon his brow.

"She hath no respect of persons, this maiden," he said; "it is the fault of her upbringing in camps and assemblies of violent men. Alas! that my lines have fallen to me by the Waters of Strife—yea, by the streams of Babel, which, being interpreted, signifieth confusion!"

As he stood in speech with her father, Colonel Sir Archibald Ardmillan had kept his hat on his head. For he was one of the few who, having no reason to fear either God or the devil, took small heed of the belief

prevailing in the allied armies that the chaplain of his regiment had intimacies with dwellers in strange places, and could summon the demons from their abodes, calling each familiarly by his several name, as Donat, Severio, Bandaro, and the like.

"These are the instructions of my Lord Duke," repeated Ardmillan, brusquely, "and I rely upon you to carry them out!"

He turned on his heel with a brief salutation of respect to Frances, and nodding to her father, took his way back to the headquarters of his regiment. A hard-bitten soldier of King William was Sir Archibald Ardmillan, and one who had been wounded in the groin at Steenkirk at the same time as my Lord Cutts gat his lame foot, and the whole light division found itself cut to windlestraws.

"You have offended our colonel, girl," said Patrick Wellwood. "That is not well done. Remember that upon his goodwill depends your very permission to follow the camp!"

"The camp would miss me worse than I the camp," returned the girl, patting her father's white locks indulgently. "You and I can do very well without the camp."

"Without the camp!—Without the camp, bearing His reproach!" groaned the old minister, falling straightway into a kind of reverie, and forgetting as was his custom the immediate subject of conversation.

His eyes were fixed, even the wandering left one growing set and filmy.

"A great quest," he said, raising his hand with a kind of rapture, and his voice taking on its pulpit inflexion; "a great quest—to deliver the people of the Lord out of the hand of the oppressor, from under the

hooves of the horses shod for war, and from before the charioteers that drive furiously ! "

Then he looked at his daughter with a soft sadness, remarkable in so stern a man.

" But this my dove," he went on, " my ain dove that sitteth among the rocks, that hath had her dwelling all her days among the defenced rocks ! What shall I do with her in the day of peril—in the time of battle and war ? "

The girl rose and put both her arms about the old man's neck.

" Patrick Wellwood," she said, using, in the Scots fashion, the full name of her parent, " is it not written, ' Entreat me not to leave thee or to return from following after thee ? For whither thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge ! ' "

" True, Frances," said the minister, " so it is written, and of the love of the young to the old. Moreover, whither could I send you to keep you more safe than here under my hand ? Yet for this love of thine to me-ward, the Lord that is on high recompense you, my daughter ! "

" Then I am to accompany you ? " Frances put the question with a quick upward lift of the eyelashes.

" I judge that no better may be," said the minister, " yet if it were possible I would even prefer that you should abide in one of their Popish convents rather than risk life and honour among the hellish accusers of the Brethren."

" If you did put me in a convent," said Frances, laughing, " I would climb over the wall and be after you in two hours. Aye, even as I did when you left me at my aunt's at Sawtflats. So, daddy, I warn you ! But whither are we to go ? "

The old man lifted his finger. "Hush, girl," he said, "the birds of the air may carry the matter. Come, then, closer to me!"

And tossing her bonnet over her shoulder and throwing back her fleece of shining curls with a pretty gesture, the daughter of Ardmillan's chaplain skipped across and climbed on her father's knee, even as she had done when she was a little girl of four, and Patrick Wellwood kept lumps of brown sugar in his waistcoat pocket for the only comrade whom death and the malignity of enemies had left to him.

She set her bonnet momentarily on his long white hair, anon snatching it off again as if there was something of profanation in the act. Then she curled her toes behind his leg, and said encouragingly as she perched herself, "Now, daddy, whisper!"

It was the old formula with which he had set himself to put her to sleep in mountain caves, in the old days of the Scottish persecutions, and Patrick Wellwood smiled as he heard it.

"My child," he said, very gently, "once again you and I are to take our lives in our hands, and adventure into the deserts and wild hills, that we may bring succour to God's folk suffering there—even as in the days not long agone, we of the Scottish reformation abode in dens and caves of the earth! We go to the mountains called Cevennes!"

"The Cevennes?" queried the girl, "that is in the South of France, is it not? In Languedoc, and on the borders of Spain!"

"You have not quite forgot your book lear at Geneva," he said. "I also must recall many things that I had thought for ever put behind me. For I am to journey ostensibly as a minister of the Swiss reform kirk, on a mission to persuade the Protestant

gentlemen of Provence and the Vivarais to assist the King in putting down the fanatics of the utmost hills ! "

The girl nestled closer to her father. " You will not go anywhere without me ; you have promised ! " she said, coaxing him like a babe that knows its power.

The old man sighed.

" It is my fate," he said ; " Patrick Wellwood will never lang lie snug on the lee side of any dyke. His weird can nae man shun, and to hear the whaups on the muir, and the black cock craw amang the heather a' his days is his fate and yours, my lassie ! "

" Better than to hear the mouse cheep, as said the Black Douglas, father," returned Frances, swaying herself back on his knee till she could kiss his cheek where the fine colour stood winter-ruddy and crisp as on an October pippin.

" Ah, lass, lass ! " said the old man, gently, " ye are young and see no new thing come wrang to ye, so be that it is new. But the day shall come when ye will think your ain cosy ingle-nook and a drap halesome parritch in a bicker the next best thing to Abram's bosom ! "

CHAPTER III.

My Lord Duke.

There is no doubt that of the two young people who met that pleasant clean-breathed day of July on the Brabant cornlands, Maurice Raith was the one who thought most concerning the encounter.

This, of course, was not at all according to the rules of the game. The dashing young aide and favourite secretary, to whom his chief looked to draw secrets from the breasts of great ladies (who sometimes held such in their keeping), what would he care for the daughter of the Presbyterian chaplain of a Scots regiment but lately transferred from the Dutch roster ?

What more natural than that a simple girl like Frances Wellwood should be flattered by the attentions and admiration of a handsome young officer of the General's own staff ?

Yet the truth must be told. It was Maurice Raith and not Frances Wellwood who went away with that old ache at the heart. Fifty times and other fifty he informed himself that he did not care a straw, and as often the assertion did him no good. He saw Flower-o'-the-Corn stand up against the summer sunlight, breast-high in the golden grain, a poppy (scarce redder than her lips) laid against her white dress, and eyes bluer than the blue skies looking down mirthfully at him.

But now striding back to headquarters, he ground his heel into the earth to think that she had laughed at him—yes, at him, Maurice Raith, staff-captain and favourite secretary of the Commander-in-Chief. Had she not bidden him go home and set to the careful copying of his letters on pain of being whipped!

Repeating this to himself with quite unnecessary vehemence, he suddenly laughed aloud, and so felt eased. For when a man has once treated a matter as a joke, be it for ever so brief a period, he can never take it back again into the region of the highest tragedy, where alone danger lies.

So Maurice Raith, laughing, put away his ill-humour, and made the saner masculine resolve, "The little vixen! I will be even with her yet!"

This was, however, somewhat easier to propose than to perform, considering that the young lady had by this time well-nigh forgotten his very existence, and at any rate, counted no more upon his noble moustache-twirling secretaryship than upon the well-set-up orderly who had given her a cast homeward upon Major North's charger.

There is no safeguard against the fascinations of men like being able to do without them. A girl who can fend for herself, and by herself, can afford to pick and choose, or, finding none worth the choosing, can drop her port-anchor in her own proper haven at the end of the cruise, none making her afraid. It may not be the best *finis* conceivable, but how much better than many other domestic conclusions which the world does not count sad!

Maurice Raith had not reached headquarters before he saw that something of first-rate importance had happened there in his absence. The chief, his sword pitched on the nearest chair, his plumed hat lying

broadside on the ascetic camp-bed, was striding to and fro, dictating furiously. Mounted officers were dashing out with orders to north, east, and west.

"*Raith! Raith!*" Maurice heard his name shouted with increasing volume of sound. "*Raith to see his Grace!*" A young subaltern repeated the words, adding in a lower tone, "and a devil of a temper you will find him in, my friend, when he does get hold of you! He has been demanding you with oaths and cursings for the last half-hour!"

Another muttered under his breath as Maurice passed, "God's blessing on such as you, my son! If it were not for you and your like, we might all have had to be gold-mounted, brass-buttoned staff officers, sitting on stools all day long and writing condemnable despatches."

Thus encouraged Maurice faced his chief, and lo! the great man's mood was changed. In the morning when he preached to the lad his languid philosophy of *laisser faire*, John Churchill had seemed a kind of extinct volcano, smoking the pipe of peace and prating of bygone extravagances. Now he was an earthquake, an eruption, and a hurricane all in one. He stood in the middle of the room volleying orders, despatching brusque commands to the farthest limits of the camp, arranging rendezvous with his allies, Eugene of Savoy and the sulky Badener prince.

"That is too curt, Powell," he cried, as he glanced at a despatch handed him by a staff secretary with silent deference; "why in the incomprehensible name of Lucifer, son of the morning, do you not learn to express yourself with more suavity? These gentlemen to whom you write are at least men and brothers. They have no visible tails. They stand erect upon their hind legs. Their honourable names you may read on

the lists of the Empire—the Prince Elector of Baden and the Hereditary Grand Duke of Wurtemberg. Pray address them as at least your equals, Mr. Sub-Lieutenant Richard Cobb ! "

This was the way of " Corporal John " when he had matters of weight upon his mind.

" Ah, Raith !—Captain Maurice Raith—and pray inform me whose kissing curls have kept your Presbyterian brawn and conscience so long from your work, sirrah ? This morning I gave you certain counsels, indeed, but it was not my intent that you should have proved so quick at profiting by them. However, I have here under my hand a mission for you, Master Maurice, that had better be wholly private betwixt thee and me ! "

And Maurice Raith, bowing humbly before the great captain, entered into the same apartment in which he had received his Grace's morning lecture concerning the deportment and behaviour of young men upon their promotion in Her Majesty's services.

But all things now were different, and Maurice Raith was no longer as he had been, indifferent to what he heard. For this was no matter of ladies' favours, when every word breathed of war, bloody war from South to North !

Marlborough did not now dally with his subject, but put his wishes with characteristic vigour and clearness.

" The army marches at once to the South—to the Danube perhaps, certainly to the Rhine ! "

The young man started.

" My lord, you promised me a regiment," he said.

The Commander-in-Chief laid his hand on his shoulder with more tenderness than could have been expected from so cold and stern a man.

" I promised your father, Raith, that you should

earn it first. Were you my own son you should do no less. I should do no more ! "

" I know it, my lord," said Maurice Raith ; " only show me how I am to earn it. My desire is to use my sword in your service as well as my pen."

" Ah," said the Duke, with not a trace of his recent haste, " you make the mistake of all brisk young men. There are more ways of earning military renown than the way of a bull at a fence. You have a head, Captain Raith, but you need not knock it against a stone wall. There are a thousand youngsters in my army who will lead a forlorn hope, run headlong upon a breach, storm a fort, endure danger and hunger, or lie out three days in the open fields with their wounds untended, yet think that they have done nothing out of the common. But there are not so many—indeed, I know of but one whom I would entrust with the commission which I will put into your hands this day. His name is Maurice Raith ! "

The young man's heart beat fast at the words of confidence from the lips of the great master of war.

" I am wholly at your service, my lord," he said.

The General nodded shortly.

" You speak French like a native, I believe," he went on. " For that purpose I advised your father to send you three years to Paris when we were planning how to make the most of you. You can talk like a diplomat, write like a scribe, pay court like a prince of the Holy Roman Empire—and if you could only lie with conviction, and control your hot head, you would be a tempered weapon worth using in the great game of principalities and powers ! "

His Grace of Marlborough paused a little, narrowing his eyes and looking critically at the young man between his lowered lashes.

"No," he said, as if the remark were the outcome of his scrutiny, "we cannot afford to waste you on the rough-and-tumble of battle. The like of these are good enough."

With a contemptuous shoulder he indicated where half-a-dozen young officers stood chattering and jesting in front of his quarters, waiting for despatches or merely discussing the probabilities of the campaign.

"To your regiments, gentlemen," he cried suddenly, and the concourse broke up in scared silence as the flap of the tent fell back.

Marlborough returned to a map of France which was spread out on the table before him. Maurice's eyes followed the direction of his commander's glance. The great man, with characteristic quickness, took his thought.

"No," he said, "that pleasure is not for me this time, though"—here he hesitated—"my friend Prince Eugene has promised his most Christian Majesty a visit one of these days. But you, Captain Raith, are to make a little journey, in any disguise that may suit you, through a portion of Louis Bourbon's dominions."

He laid his finger far to the south, drawing it diagonally across the south-east corner of France.

"There," he said, grimly, "is the ulcer within his gates, which may yet cripple the householder—the Grande Monarque! You have heard of the Cevennes?" he concluded, looking up swiftly.

Maurice looked surprised.

"I have, as your Grace knows, written many letters at your instance to the chiefs of the insurrection among those mountains."

"Hush!" said the Duke, smiling, "you are a clever lad, Maurice, but each morning the mind of a

good secretary ought to be like a clean-wiped slate. What I write upon it one day has no relation with what was written there the day before. But at all events, you are to journey thither, and privately and unofficially to encourage the leaders of the revolt. There are to be English ships of war on the Mediterranean coast, at a place which I will show you before you leave, upon a date which I will also communicate. You will see that the stores and warlike material reach those for whom it is intended—that is, our persecuted fellow-Protestants of the South of France."

It is possible that there was a slightly humorous cast upon the Duke's countenance as he uttered these words, but his eye met that of his subordinate full and defiant. John Churchill could be a good enough Protestant when it suited him; nevertheless, the words fell somewhat quaintly from his lips.

But Maurice bowed gravely.

"And, if I succeed, will that earn me my regiment?" he said, quietly.

A darker shade passed over the brow of the great commander.

"You make me inclined to think," he said, "that I have overrated your capacity. You will come to me for your final instructions to-morrow morning at five o'clock. In the meantime you will provide yourself with whatever disguise seems to you most fitting. Remember, you must expect no assistance from us if you are caught. In that case you will assuredly be hung for a spy. Pray make your reckoning with that."

Maurice bowed a second time and went out.

"Surely so much risk is worth a regiment, at least," he said softly to himself, as he heard the General summon one of his fellow-secretaries to receive another letter at dictation.

CHAPTER IV.

Pierre the Waggoner.

The great folk being done with for a while, issue we forth upon the clean-washen high road of middle France, none to vex us for a hundred leagues, save only the occasional exactions and constant overbearing manners of the men-at-arms at the city gates, and the dust-swirls that swept and waltzed between the pollarded willows of its endless perspectives.

"Hey! Ola! Allez!" cried a certain nut-brown carter to his leading beast as it tugged up the long ascent of the Causse of Larzac. "Take your head out from between your knees and pull with the others, you spindle-shanked, raw-boned lump of laziness!"

And the cracking of a huge Languedocian whip, bought over against the church of Mazamet, punctuated the appeal.

There is no highway in the world to-day like that of France. There may be more imminent horizons, wilder outlookings upon moss-hag and granite hills. There are certainly some with more flowery meads set on either side, ankle-deep — thigh-deep, if you choose, in buttercup and meadow-sweet. There are whiter lines of cottages by Scottish highways, and redder brick cottages more deeply smothered in ivy at the corners of English lanes.

But for all that is pleasant in the pleasantest time

of the year, there is nothing in all the world like a French road—not too far to the north, when the rye is ready and the wheat stands ripe and level. And so thought Pierre Dubois, master-carrier between the towns of Roche-à-Bayard and Hoo, whose calling and abode were expressed in large letters upon the tilting of his three great waggons. A stout young man, an absolutely respectable man, a man of his fists and other folk's affairs was this Master Pierre. He had documents, too, enough to satisfy an army of inquirers. Had he not the King's own seal for the right of entry into and exit out of France? By profession he was licensed carrier of wine from the recently-added province of Alsace to the King's most excellent and wine-bibbing majesty.

But in that case what was he doing cracking his whip upon the steep rise of the Causse de Larzac, this bluff northern Monsieur Pierre of Roche-à-Bayard and Hoo?

Ah! that was another story, and he had yet another certificate for that. Were there not servants of the King in these semi-savage solitudes—leading strange lives, hunters of men, scourges of fanatics, shooters at sight of Camisard and Huguenot, getting small thanks for all their pains, yet daily exposing their lives on desolate waterless hills, where scarce a Caussenard sheep could gain a livelihood, ever in danger of a Protestant bullet from behind some juniper bush or ridge of limestone rock? What more natural than that, the bulk of the sparkling wine of the Meuse and Moselle having been delivered at Marly for the throat of Royalty, the thoughtful King Louis should bid so safe a messenger to continue his way southward, with sundry casks of the same vintage to cheer the hearts of his faithful servants, battling year in and year out with

hill-preachers and long-haired enthusiasts in the blue misty valleys of the Cevennes.

At all events this which followeth is what the aforesaid Pierre of Roche-à-Bayard and Hoo carried written upon his manifests and traffic-permits:

"*Three great and three little casks of wine of the Moselle, committed to the care of Master-carrier Pierre Dubois, of the towns of Roche-à-Bayard and Hoo—the property of his most Christian Majesty Louis, King of France and Brittany; to be carried free of all duty, local or imperial, to the King's servants, the Maréchal de Montrevel and the Brigadier-General de Planque—being a present from his most Christian Majesty.*"

Surely as simple, convincing, irrefragable a document as ever was written upon a sheet of paper with the royal arms of France at the top! Nevertheless, there were other things in the barrels besides Moselle wine, and the handsome jolly-faced carter had in early life, and, indeed, till within the last two weeks, owned to the name of Maurice Raith, while his most convincing papers had been obtained—well, as such things can always be obtained when "the highest quarters" interest themselves in—wine carriers and their passports.

And certainly Monsieur Pierre the Flamand played his part with vigour and resolution. He wore no false hair or beard. The stain on his complexion was not deeper than that which bronzed the cheeks of many a sturdy follower of the crawling road waggons and blue-sheeted carriers' carts. Pierre of Roche-à-Bayard and Hoo had been careful not to overdo his part. A man of the north, he was naturally less inclined to loud outcries and clamorous greetings than the other occupants of the roadside inns where he put up. He had also a certain quietly smiling dignity which sat well upon him.

His three waggons were all excellently horsed—so well, indeed, that more than one cavalry officer, gathering remounts for the military service, had threatened to press his entire stock of beasts in the King's name, desisting only when informed of the mission on which he was proceeding and the directly royal patronage which the carrier of Hoo enjoyed.

It chanced that just as this sturdy Pierre left the town of Millau behind him, passing over that famous and ancient bridge of which the two shoreward piers on either side form completely equipped mills, he came suddenly upon a curiously assorted group.

Half-a-dozen King's troopers stood hectoring and storming upon the broad irregular paving-stones of the Pont Royal. Three of them were holding down a huge half-naked giant of a man, whose abundant shaggy hair was bound about with a bloody rag. His hands were tied behind his back with a rope, the which yet another man was endeavouring to tighten, while his waistcoat, turned and defaced as it was and stripped of all marks and military badges, weatherstained and tattered, still bore the indestructible *cachet* of the British regimental tailor.

The sergeant in charge of the soldiers was laughing at the uncouth actions and speech of a woman who alternately raised her hands to heaven, imprecating curses upon all recruiting parties in broad Scots, and threw herself on her knees, clasping his feet and declaring in quite intelligible French that a man so nobly gifted by nature would never take away her only protector, her master and lord — even Billy Marshall, from whose hands she had taken beatings innumerable and whose "poke" she had carried along the roads of every country in Europe.

The wine-carrier cried ahead to clear the way, but

the soldiers of King Louis never moved, holding to their prisoner and enjoying the scene. Who, if not they, had a right to the King's highway ?

But at the very first glance Maurice Raith knew the man, and resolved if possible to attach him to his own cavalcade. He recognised the prisoner as one Billy Marshall, a famous gipsy from Keltonhill in Galloway. Also, what was more strange, an answering gleam shot from underneath the sombre, slumberous eyelids of the gipsy. In spite of the disguise of carter dress and walnut stain the old expert in concealments recognised his sometime officer. But not a word or look betrayed that either had ever seen the other.

Pierre the waggoner did not hesitate a moment. He halted his horses with a long-drawn professional shout, clubbed his whip by twisting the lash round his arm and wrist and strode masterfully into the crowd.

" What are you doing here, you sulky, runaway knave ? " he cried, striking the bound man again and again with the whip across his thickly-thatched bullet head and naked shoulders, till he moaned aloud with apparent pain.

The woman rose with a shriek, and would have flown upon her lord's new enemy, but the prisoner stopped her with a peculiar clucking noise, the first note of which was sufficient to halt her, though Bet Marshall's fingers were already curved into talons to assault the waggoner's face.

" See you," cried Pierre of Roche-à-Bayard and Hoo, holding up his papers to the sergeant, " here is this fellow who was given to me to be my ostler and under-roulier on the King's service ! He must needs get tipsy on liquor meant for his betters, and then to make bad worse, overrun me in the night. I am

deeply indebted to you, gentlemen all, for detaining him till I came up——"

"And pray who may you be that can afford to talk so briskly of the King's service?" cried the sergeant; "we of the 24th Grenadiers had an idea that we possessed some claim to that title. Since when did the knitted short clothes and broad buttons of the waggoner constitute a uniform of His Majesty?"

"Pray cast your eyes over that," quoth Pierre the carrier, quietly, "and you will find that the King has many servants, and that he has few more useful than those who carry his own good Moselle wine to his own faithful soldiers."

"Here, Manse, read the scrawl aloud," cried the sergeant, holding the certificate upside down, between his finger and thumb; "it is writ in your plaguey running script, and no man of his hands can make shift to read aught but honest print—and, indeed, as little of that as maybe."

A tall grenadier came forward and took the papers out of the hand of his superior officer, with an air of meekest resignation.

He read the commission through, the sergeant punctuating the sentences with nods.

"That is very well," he said, "but in it I hear no mention of my prisoner, or description of his person. He is an able-bodied sturdy knave, and I had just pressed him for His Majesty's military service. I cannot let him go without cause shown—or (here he coughed behind his hand) its equivalent. He is worth a gold Louis to me at headquarters any day!"

"Louis-d'ors are none so plenty with us lads of the road that we can afford to scatter them broadcast to buy back our drunken ostlers. But," Maurice made a grimace and jerked his thumb behind him,

"all is not the King's sealed wine which I carry. I have a cask of the best, that is at the service of my friends, and if——" Here he lowered his voice and spoke into the ear of the soldier.

"Well, well, cast him loose," the sergeant ordered; "far be it from me to interfere with the King's wine. But when you meet with the Maréchal de Montrevel do not forget to inform his Excellency what an excellent and deserving fellow is Sergeant Passy, of the 24th regiment of Grenadiers!"

"Indeed, I shall not forget!" said the waggoner, heartily; "but in the meantime give me a hand at unslinging this pretty thing, which I carry under my third waggon; it does not bear the seal royal, but it will trickle down thirsty throats like divine nectar for all that!"

The soldiers piled their pieces with looks of expectation, and with right good will assisted in broaching a small cask of white wine which was attached underneath the third of Pierre's waggons. Then each man, from the sergeant to the last-joined recruit, wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, a clear instance of what is known as "expectant attention."

Meanwhile, Billy Marshall and his wife Bet had betaken themselves naturally to the care of the horses, where they were much needed. For ever since he had passed Clermont Ferrand Monsieur Pierre, the waggoner of Hoo, had been woefully short-handed. One of the men he had taken on at Paris deserted, having found a sweetheart of certain complaisant charms in the neighbourhood of that city. The other Pierre had been glad to get rid of by dismissal—a quarrelsome fellow, and inclined to know too much of his master's business. So for the last forty or fifty miles Master Dubois of Roche-à-Bayard and Hoo had done three men's work, assisted solely by such

wayside volunteers as a kind Providence causes to spring up all over the world whenever there is a man in trouble with a horse. (The last of these had made a bolt for it nigh Millau bridge-end, at the mere sight of King Louis's uniforms upon the highway.)

So it was well that Billy Marshall and Bet his wife fell into their places with the alacrity of long custom. Billy's movements were peculiar. He passed down the line of horses, standing a moment in front of each with his hands on either side of the great brass-studded blinkers. Then he passed his fingers lightly across the beast's moist nose. The horse sucked its breath suddenly in, blew it out again slowly, and the transaction completed itself by Billy Marshall bending forward suddenly and whispering in the new friend's ear. This he did, while the soldiers and Pierre were amicably touching cans, previous to pouring the good Moselle down their half-dozen thirsty throats.

The sergeant looked after Billy a trifle regretfully.

"A sturdy capable fellow that," he said, shaking his head, "knowing about horses, too. 'Tis as well that I am no cavalry recruiting sergeant, else I might not have let him go so easily. I should advise you to obtain a letter of protection for him before you are a day older, besides which that callet of his is by no means an ill-looking wench! The sergeants of cavalry regiments, especially such as gather in recruits—well, you understand!"

Pierre the waggoner thanked him profusely for his advice.

"I will see to it this very day," he said.

The sergeant of grenadiers looked at him a trifle strangely over his cup.

"For a man so generously provided with papers,"

he said, slily, "you are strangely ignorant. It is not on the Causse of Larzac that one can provide oneself with such letters of protection."

"And where may I be able to obtain them?" said Pierre, humbly. "I am from the far North, as you may hear!" He had the blank forms in his breast-pocket at that moment, but it was just as well to know whence such things came.

"Why, as to that, either from the Governor of the Cevennes, at Mende, Monsieur de Broglie—or when you come to the camp of the Maréchal de Montrevel; though unless you have a good many barrels of this excellent stuff to broach, this man of yours may get picked up by the way."

"Now, good friends, empty out your canteens, and I will fill them for you," cried Pierre in a loud voice, "and with better stuff than has been in them for some time or may be again. But you, sergeant, must give me a paper saying that you have tried this man in your company and discharged him as useless."

"That I will," the soldier laughed, "or, at least, so will Philip Manse. Once Philip was a Protestant, as rare a psalm-singer as any, but a few matches in the palm of his hand applied by Monsieur the Abbé du Chayla converted him for good. A rare fearful man is this Manse, but he can compose hand-of-write like an angel, and when set between two steadfast old route-marchers of our grenadiers, he can make shift to fire off his piece somewhere in the direction of the enemy!"

The tall soldier with the lantern-jaws, who had not been thought of sufficient importance to warrant him in drinking along with his fellows (the sergeant had taken Manse's portion down without remark), was

now called forward and ordered to write a protective paper which would have some merit in it, the sergeant prompting him before he set quill to paper.

"Write it in name of my Colonel, sirrah—De Breslin—do you hear?" ordered the sergeant. "That will carry more weight than the name of a mere halbert-shoulderer like me. Besides, since we march immediately to the north, at any rate away from the Cevennes, to counter the English Duke on the Rhine—who will be any the wiser? There—done like a good fellow. A bumper of wine for Manse. What! you do not drink? Well, your health, Manse. I, at least, have no canting scruples; indeed, I would that more of my company were similarly affected."

And the soldier swigged down the tall can of wine provided for the scribe, who, meantime, was looking at his own rubication of the name De Breslin with the appreciation of an artist.

As he rose, however, from the bench on which he had been sitting, with the paper still in his hand, he waved it to dry the ink in such a way as to attract the attention of Billy Marshall, the gipsy, who was mending a broken strap with whipcord. A glance of extraordinary meaning shot between the two men, a glance which, though unseen by the sergeant and his men, was not lost upon Pierre the waggoner.

"Once a Camisard, always a Camisard," he muttered to himself. "So, at least, I have heard, and I question whether the conversion of that grenadier is quite so genuine as his sergeant supposes."

CHAPTER V.

The Road to Keltonhill.

"And now, Billy," said the waggoner, abruptly dropping the manner and speech of Pierre Dubois and assuming those of Captain Maurice Raith, "how came you here? I left you a corporal in the Cameronians. I find you a ragged deserter, about to be kidnapped and pressed into the service of the enemy. Pray explain yourself, Corporal William Marshall. You deserve to be had out and shot, so far as I can see."

By this time they had raised the mural front of the Causse of Larzac, and could look away across it towards the long lines of limestone crags which rose, sharp as Vauban's fortifications, out of the level tableland. The evening was falling swiftly, rose and orange tones sinking into the V-shaped angles of the valleys they were leaving behind them. It was Maurice's first night in the true Cevennes.

Billy Marshall replied in the broad Galloway folk speech which a dozen years of desultory military service had not overlaid even with English oaths or the slightest knowledge of the language of any of the countries in which he had campaigned.

"Maister Raith," he said, "ye hae dune a guid turn to Billy Marshall this day, an' the deil tak' him and brenn him in reid pit-fire gin he forgets it. Bet, do ye hear that?"

"I hear, William," said his lady. She was seated busily preparing for the pot a fowl, which she had found straying upon the road and had nipped up beneath her apron without permitting the moribund to emit even a cry of surprise. It was for this craft (among other merits) that Billy, her husband, graciously permitted Bet to accompany him upon all his marches and campaigns.

"Weel, heed, then," said Billy, sourly, "ye think o' nocht but your belly, Bet. But Billy Marshall o' the guid drucken toun o' Kirkcudbright is nae mainnerless landlouper, but a weel-kenned man wi' a trade o' his ain, whilk is juist the makkin' o' horn spunes. Na, na, an honest well-doin' man is Billy and as mindfu' o' ither fowk's mooths as he is o' his ain!"

"Get on with your tale, Marshall," interrupted Maurice Raith. "I have heard nothing yet to prove that you are not the deserter I thought you at first!"

"And what for no, should I no be oot on juist sic a wee bit quiet job as your ain, captain?" insinuated the gipsy, shrewdly. "Ye are no here for your health, as yin micht say. I could guess as muckle as that by the aid o' the puir bit heid-piece that the Auldmichty has gi'en me!"

"What I am doing here does not immediately concern you," said the disguised officer. "I have saved you from the drill-sergeants of King Louis. I want to be sure, before you and I go further, whether I shall have to deliver you to the halter of the King's provost marshal!"

The gipsy gave vent to a low chuckle.

"It's easy seen that ye are no a richt Galloway man, captain," he said, "na, na—the grandfaither o' ye cam' frae Nithside wi' thae weary Maxwells, that had

nae business to meddle wi' Gallowa' ava. Or ye wad ken that no for a' the hangin' provosts and cornels in the airmies o' a' the Queens an' Emperors and siclike in Kirsendom, wad Billy Marshall miss Keltonhill fair. Sae said I to Major Grier o' the sax-and-twentieth, says I—"Ye ken Billy, sir, an' that if he doesna get leave to gang to Keltonhill fair, he will tak' leeve and syne be hangit for his pains! Noo, Major, you an' me are nae ill freends, gie me the leeve, an' let Bet an' me be gaun. I'se be back in time to fecht the French wi' the best o' them!" And the Major, him kennin' me an' me kennin' him, bade me drive aboot my business and tak' Bet wi' me. But he garred me swear on the crossed horn-spunes that I wad be back to him in four months' time. An' sae will I, gin the soles o' my feet dinna wear oot on the road!"

"But," said Maurice Raith, who knew the Major of the Cameronians and recognised that the tale was worthy of credit, "in that case what are ye doin' here on a mountain in the very middle of France, instead of heading for Antwerp to get a boat bound for Leith?"

The gipsy looked at him cunningly, and laid a broad grimy finger on a broad and grimy nose. "Is it not possible that ye may hae your reasons and that I may hae my reasons," he said, quickly; "there's a sea to the south as weel as to the north of France. And the shortest cut is whyles the langest travel!"

With which example of proverbial lore Maurice Raith had for the time to be perforce content.

By this time the horses were thoroughly wearied. The long ascent of the Causse had tried them severely, and it became necessary to rest them, either at the first wayside inn which presented itself, or to make their camp upon the open face of the desert. They

were, however, so close to the disturbed regions that the utmost care was necessary. Maurice Raith took out a small case of arms which had been cunningly concealed in the sacking under the first waggon. The eyes of the gipsy glittered at the sight.

"I hae naething but this gully-knife," he said, "an' faith, a pistol or twa doesna come wrang whiles in this haverin' ootlandish country!"

He strapped the satchel of powder and shot carefully about his waist, under his tattered blue blouse, with chuckles of unconcealed satisfaction.

"Faith, na," he said, "I haena carriet as muckle guid poother and lead since I waded Boyne Water at the tail o' auld King Wullie! And if yer honour haes the like for Bet there, I'se uphaud that she will mak' every bit as guid a use o' 't as either you or me!"

"Mind," said Maurice Raith, "none of your caird tricks here! Ye are no on the Corse o' Slakes, you and Bet, nor yet on the English drove-road ayont Carlisle. Ye are to threaten none, take no man's purse, put no wayfarer in fear. You are to consider yourself under my orders as much as if you were in the camp of my Lord Marlborough himself. And more, in word and deed, you are to treat me as Pierre Dubois, the waggoner of Roche-à-Bayard and Hoo, who has picked you up by the way, and is likely to make a monstrous bad bargain of you."

"Aye, aye, I'm hearin' ye!" said Billy, the gipsy, with the deep inward sullenness of the race of Egypt when they feel themselves coerced without remedy.

"Pay attention, then," said Maurice Raith, "or—maybe ye have heard of the Caird o' Carsphairn?"

"That was hangit juist for a chucky hen and a dozen eggs, mair nor half o' them clockit! Oh, the ineequity o' 't! A fine, heartsome, able-bodied man, too; at

least, so they tell me ! " Bet struck in, with a suggestion of the Irish keen in her voice.

" Even so," said Maurice Raith, " and his Grace of Marlborough standing by to see that the knot ran true up to his left ear. So take your warning, Billy and Bet ! "

With this he strode off to test the halters and heel ropes of his horses. For the true Caussenards, Camisard and Cadet of the Cross alike, were famous horse stealers, and every stable in the limestone country had two doors—one that opened outward and the other inward, and which continued to do so in spite of drawn bolts and shot bars.

So Maurice Raith, till he should find himself safe in the camp of the Camisard leaders, preferred to stable his horses at the ancient sign of La Belle Etoile, and guard them himself with his pistols upon his knees.

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It was, fortunately, a night short and beneficent, whose shadow swept so swiftly eastward towards the sunset over the middle southlands of the Cevennes. Down in the valley of the Tarn, fairest of the glens of France, the nightingales never ceased singing, but the chill spread far up among the fantastic peaks of the Dourbie, and here, out on the hoary scalp of the Larzac, the frost bit bone-deep. Maurice wrapt his cloak closely about him and sat sleepless, listening to the voices of the night ; sometimes there was a singing rustle as of leaves and distant waters in that waterless and treeless land, sometimes the cry of a far-wandered lamb seeking its mother over the waste, or the hawking cry of the small owl, quartering the ground in quest of field mice and great horned beetles.

But as he sat there motionless, Maurice had time to

think, and was grateful. It was almost the first time he had been able to do so with a fairly easy mind since he left the camp of the allies before Namur. He had dealt severely with Billy Marshall, as he told himself, for the good of his gipsy soul, but it was an infinite relief to have even his company amid such dangers. For he knew the good qualities of the sometime corporal of Cameronians, his courage, fidelity, and strength, his unswerving purpose and ready resource in time of danger.

Maurice resolved that Billy should not see Keltonhill Fair this year if possible, but bide with him upon the perilous tablelands of the Cevennes, if money or love could keep him there.

The stars swung silently overhead, describing their longer or shorter circles round the pole star, and Maurice continued to look into the grey indefinite waste of nothingness. His mind went back involuntarily to the glowing vision he had seen among the corn that day above the Meuse—the light girlish figure, the lips astonishingly red, the eyes bluer than the skies, at once sapphire-dark and diamond-bright. Would he ever see her again? Sometimes it seemed little matter whether or no.

Her reception of him had not been promising. In addition to which he, Maurice Raith, at the outset of his career, could ill afford to "taigle himself with weemen," as his Aunt Devorgill would have said. At this he smiled, for his quick imagination overpassed in a moment both courtship and marriage, and lo! he was bringing home a bride to the grey towers of Castle Raith, on its island in the Raith Water. He saw his aunt, arrayed in her Sunday best, snell, intolerant, cast-windy, lamb-soft. She was standing on the steps to welcome his wife and himself—a rasp as of

rowan-berry jelly under her tongue, and all the milk of human kindness unspent in the bosom where no child of her own had ever lain—perhaps that it might cherish all such as were motherless and forlorn and desolate—even as Maurice Raith had been since his mother's death.

For a long time the vision diverted him. He smiled continuously. He could hear his aunt scolding him for "bringin' the bit lassie oot on siccan a day." She was declaring that he "deserved to hae his lugs daudit!" adding that for the smallest possible monetary consideration she, Devorgilla Raith, would attend to the matter herself—"the wind was eneuch to perish the bit thing, bringin' a bairn that was dootless used to far ither things to an auld, broken-doon, damp rickle-o'-stanes, mair fit to be a den o' cockatrices an' ravenin' wild beasts than a decent cumceiled hoose to fetch a young leddy intil!"

Maurice Raith had got so far with his vision when he laughed aloud. It struck him suddenly that he had overlooked one thing, somewhat essential. Who was the bride?

As when we try to recall the features of one very dear newly gone from us, so even as Maurice looked, the face of the bride by his side became suddenly dim, and then vanished altogether. His aunt he still saw in vision sharp and clear, as well as the old grey towers of Raith, and the deep amber pools of the Raith Water; but the bride, whom he had brought home to her own, waxed suddenly misty and vague, and a voice seemed to speak from very far away, "Go back and see that my lord's letters are prettily copied or you will be whipped!"

Then it was that Maurice Raith slept. The waking dream ran into the clear cool mists of sleep, blue and

buoyant, whereon he was upborne as sweetly as on cushions of the viewless air. The solid towers of Castle Raith melted like pillars of cloud. Only his aunt Devorgill stood imminent above, threatening him with uplifted forefinger "not to taigle himsel' wi' weemen."

Well, Maurice Raith knew someone who could not be called a "woman," with the least regard, that is, to the meaning of the words. What, then, ought this bride to be called?

Why, Flower-o'-the-Corn, of course.

And as he slept he dreamed, and as he dreamed he smiled.

CHAPTER VI.

The Mysteries of Love.

Perhaps, for who knows the mysteries of the influence of soul on soul, the dream of the night which descended upon Maurice Raith as he sat with his pistols on his knees, wrapped in his cloak upon the tufted scalp of the Larzac, overpassed the mile or two of misty, frost-scented darkness which separated him from a little double-windowed roof-chamber where sat a girl, her chin sunk in the joined palms of her hands, and her bare dimpled elbows resting lazily upon the sill. She looked out northward and watched the Star y Bear sagging lower and lower as the night wore on. The chill of the air struck cold upon the outer wall of the chamber, so that through the common green window-glass, the star at the Plough corner (which a good eye can see double) ,was blurred into a tingling iridescence of red and blue and emerald green. But this did not matter. The girl's eyes were full of a deeper haze than that which filled the valley of the Dourbie far below, the misty wonder of a maid's eyes as she looks into the future and sees wonders yet unrealised. This haze comes otherwise to a woman. Then she sees it mostly when she tastes her happiness and finds her realised dream sweeter, perhaps, upon her lips, but somehow other than she had imagined—her soul no longer going

forth, as in girlhood, upon all the winds of fancy, but willingly, and even eagerly, abiding captive within the flesh. Then for the second time her eyes grow misty. And as for the third time, that is not with the view of any earthly city.

So Flower-o'-the-Corn meditated, and her meditation was sweet to her, as a free-hearted maiden's ought to be.

There was no one in all the world whom she loved one-tenth so well as she loved her father. For no man that lived (so she told herself) would she have caused to perish one lock of his white hair. That the day must come when with rolling drum, muffled and forlorn, and that terrible rattle of volleyed musketry, they would lay away the chaplain of Ardmillan's regiment, was a contingency too dreadful to be faced. The young naturally put these things from them as long as possible. And so also did Frances Wellwood.

Yet for all that, because she was young and a maid, and having arrived also at the period of her wandering years, her mind went from her, straying hither and thither like a butterfly among the parterres, finding here an innocent daisy and there a blood-red poppy. She communed much with herself, this girl, as was indeed natural. For there was no friend of her own sex in all the camp with whom she could exchange secrets the most prodigious, as the manner of women is.

Flower-o'-the-Corn's world was exclusively a world of men. Yet of all these she knew but one well—her father. For the rest, the stern-faced veterans of Ardmillan's regiment circled her about like a wall. She was watched and guarded like a virgin citadel. She might have been spoilt by too ready service and homage, had she not been accustomed to these as to her daily rations, ever since the time when, while

yet a young subaltern in " Leven's Foot," Colonel Ardmillan had been accustomed to lift her high in the air with both hands, or ride her till she screamed with delight, upon the uppers of his military boot.

Yet for all her ease of mind as to men in general, Frances smiled not ill-pleased as she bethought her of that day among the Namur corn, by the side of the sunken road, when at the parting of a bush of broom an eager-eyed youth of handsome aspect had stood dumb-stricken before her—the fulness of his homage presently mounting to his brow and telling its tale in the stammering accents of his tongue.

She thought not a little of Maurice—Captain Raith of his Grace's staff—thought kindly, too. Oh, yes, she knew him well, and his favour with my lord. Were not these things talked of whenever the grave-faced, hard-bitten, war-worn, infinitely experienced Presbyterian officers of Ardmillan's (late Cutts's) regiment and Shields's Cameronians dropped in of an evening to smoke their pipes with her father, while she knitted her stocking and listened amid the bluish haze to such talk as seldom fell to the lot of girls to hear—of slave-ships with hundreds of prayerful Covenant folk cast away among the wrathful skerries of the wild Hebrides, of poisoned arrows whisking out of the green depths of forests tropical, of battle, murder, and sudden death stalking broadcast as the painted savage swooped into some quiet New England valley, or, as it might be, of the battles and sieges of the great Gustavus (whom they knew), concerning which last things some rusty greybeard would speak, and go on speaking as if he could never be silent, or his hearers tired of listening.

And all the while Patrick Wellwood, who had lain in the desert with one Mr. Richard Cameron, and ridden

with Will Gordon and that other Lion of the Covenant in the last surging charge at Ayrsmoss, would raise the conversation to a higher plane, by calling upon these grim fighters to observe the finger of God in the things which had been, which were, and especially the things which should yet come to pass.

Meantime, far from her regiment, Frances leaned her dimpled elbow upon the window-sill and smiled. And in his sleep under the sole tent of his cloak some way out on the wold, Maurice Raith also smiled, as if a good angel visited him in sleep. And so, perhaps, one did.

But even as she leaned upon the narrow window-sill and looked abroad, a belated moon rose, large, pale, and crumbly with age about the edges.

The waning of the moon is the time to see the Causses of France, especially those which, like the Causse of Larzac, are large enough to have a level horizon all round, from which ramparts and towers arise, to the eye built of bleached and shivered bones. Out on the dim waste these huge shapes glimmer suddenly up like couchant monsters, the dragons and mammoths of an earlier world.

The moon, gibbous and worm-eaten above, too grey and forlorn to cast a shadow yet bright enough to reveal the pebble that the foot strikes upon, sailed feebly onwards.

Small wonder that demons and evil sprites haunted this waste, and that many Caussenards had seen the Wild Horseman shriek past upon the blast, the fire blown far to either side from his charger's nostrils and his own head carried conveniently before him upon his saddle-bow.

As Frances sat at the window and watched the late moon rise, she was aware of a crouching line of dark

figures that disengaged themselves one by one from the rude wall of the mountain village, and stole across the space which separated the last houses from the outer defences. For a long moment each bowed head and bent pair of shoulders were silhouetted against the great flattened oval of the moon as it reared itself slowly up out of the valley mists. A gun-barrel rose black here and there. A scabbard clinked sharply on a pebble, or in the distance, as the light fell more sideways, a slant bayonet gleamed momentarily like a willow leaf turning its pale underside to the blast.

Frances Wellwood and her father had reached the country of the Cevennes in the simplest and swiftest way, by the Rhine and the Protestant cantons of Switzerland. The pastors of Geneva and the political leaders of that place had their own means of communicating with the districts where their fellow-religionists continued to make such successful head against the forces of the King and the all-powerful Church. It was easy enough, therefore, for Patrick Wellwood and his daughter to pass into the fastnesses of the Cevennes nearly a month before a certain Pierre the waggoner, of Roche-à-Bayard and Hoo, made his encampment upon its outer margin.

Nevertheless, so mysterious are the waves of apprehension which pass across certain sensitive spirits, that Frances Wellwood, a maid of camps and barrack-yards, where trumpets are nightly blown, and men file out at all hours on errands dark even to themselves, felt something that was not the chill of the hoar-frost, run cold through her marrow at the sight of these dark shadows crossing the ashen oval of the moon's disc.

As they passed from her view she went quickly to her father's room. The door was unlatched. She

went in without knocking, and pausing a moment on the threshold to listen in vain for his breathing, at last advanced on tiptoe. The bed was intact. It had not been slept in.

"He is in his closet—at prayer!" she thought, and felt with her hands for the white head, in the place where she knew it would have been found. For the minister prayed always with his face, as it were, towards Jerusalem. His head was thrown back, and there are those who declare that on such occasions, when the spirit was mightily moved within him, his brow shone haloëd in the darkness and his face became as the face of an angel. And even Frances, when asked in future years if this were so, would neither answer "yea" or "nay," but used this one phrase: "Only those who have heard my father pray know what it is to pray!"

"He is not here!" she murmured, stepping back quickly, when she felt that the niche was empty. "Can he have wandered out again? He is so careless. He promised me faithfully after the last time. But then he is very forgetful!"

For Frances had bound her father by a great oath not to go out and wander alone hour after hour as was his habit, ever since he had well-nigh been shot by one of the camp sentries at the first siege of Namur.

"Pluck your apples elsewhere, if you must," she had bidden him sharply. "These are not the banks of Ulai, but of Meuse, and a musket-ball, be it French or English, or moulded by the Holy Roman Empire, is no respecter of persons!"

"Either he has broken his word, or he has taken to dreaming again," she murmured to herself, unhappily. Then suddenly she remembered the silent exodus she had seen, and in a transport of fear she clasped her

hands and cried aloud, "They have taken him away against his will. Otherwise he would never have gone without telling me."

Frances stood a moment thinking swiftly. Then she went to the corner of her chamber, and taking down a dark fold of Spanish lace, threw it about her head, gathering it round her neck in the manner of a mantilla. Then, since the night promised to be cold, she drew her father's great cloak about her. The window was high, and, save to an athlete, impossible; though, in all conscience, the stonework of the old wall built by the Templars was crumbling enough. But Frances Wellwood knew another way of it. Her father had gone out, and by the same road he had taken, she could descend also. She was positive that he had not passed her door unheard. She had been too wide awake.

She remembered, however, that the low archway which her father used for an entrance into his prayer niche, had a door that opened some whither. Accordingly, she turned back there, and, setting her hand upon the latch, easily pushed the iron-bound portal open. She came against the outer dark as against a wall, and found herself at the head of an outside stair, which (as in many of the houses of the eastern part of her native land) connects the second, and even the third, storey with the ground.

When she had time to look about her, lo! the stars were blinking merrily. The heat haze in the valley had altogether vanished, and there was a snell and piercing breath of frost abroad.

Still there was neither sight nor sound of her father.

Frances stood still as death while one might count twenty, listening. Everywhere there was a great silence. The black windows of the Camisard village

beneath seemed to be spying upon her. The streets of La Cavalerie were narrow, irregular, and drowned in deep shadow. The moon, grown old and sickly of aspect, seemed unable to make her pale beams penetrate them. Her light sifted down scarce brighter than so much star-shine.

But Flower-o'-the-Corn had put her hand to the plough and she would not go back. Resolutely she drew her cloak about her, and set forth to look for her father. He had taken his little red double-volumed Covenanter's Bible with him. She had made sure of that. So it appeared to Frances that the errand upon which he had gone must be a religious one. Indeed, at that hour and in that place it was not likely that he would have gone forth on any other. But the old fighting-blood of the man who had ridden with Grey of Chryston, and the two Camerons, at Ayrsmoss, might possibly have persuaded him that it was still a religious duty to hew Agag in pieces before the Lord. In short, Patrick Wellwood's mission might very well be religious without being at all pacific.

Flower-o'-the-Corn did not hesitate a moment after her first half-feminine uncertainty. Swiftly and lightly she glided up one narrow close and down another, till she found herself within the outer belt of gardens, whose multitudinous intersecting walls made such excellent fore-cover to these Puritan peasants, militant against spiritual wickedness among the High Cevennes.

She had often enough found her way out of the labyrinth by day. It was a task somewhat more difficult by night. But with a keen sense of direction (when outside the walls of a house) Flower-o'-the-Corn presently succeeded in surmounting the last stone

dyke and stood in the ditch, or dry trench rather, which defended the fortified village of La Cavalerie.

A little to the left, above the low earthen rampart, Frances could see the head and shoulders of a Camisard sentinel. At intervals she cou'd hear the bagpipe drone of his chanted psalm. Anon there came to her ear a metallic sound as he grounded his piece on the battlements, and gazed away northward, motionless as those pallid limestone pinnacles on the skyline.

Frances continued to crouch quietly in the ditch till the man had taken himself off to the other end of his beat. His watch to-night was doubtless somewhat perfunctory, knowing as he did that the greater part of the effective fighting force of the village was out upon the Causse in front of his position.

At last the chant of his psalms, lilted in Camisard fashion with copious grace-notes and quavers, grew faint in the distance. Frances caught up her cloak and skirts and sped hastily across the sparse grass of the sheep pasture, in the track of the expedition she had seen leave the village so silently.

The moon was, for the time being, behind a cloud, and shone through various thin places here and there, like a lantern that is moved to and fro in a tent.

There was no trail to be followed upon the dusty pebble-strewn greyness of the limestone upland. But as the dark figures took their way across the moon's disc, Frances had almost involuntarily observed that a long, low, jagged scarp of limestone showed like a broken tooth against the rising moon, almost in the line of their march.

This now appeared very obvious immediately in front of her, lying pallid and unearthly right across her path, the moon's rays striking mistily upon it,

while the passing shadow of the cloud still hung gloomily over the face of the desert and the fortified Camisard village which she had left behind her.

Flower-o'-the-Corn felt a sudden terror overpower her. She was, of course, armed as usual.

But there seemed to be some daunting influence abroad that night upon the waste. It was so high up under the moon, so sharply overarched by the tingling stars, that somehow spirits good and evil alike might be expected to choose it as their natural playground in preference to the warm, homely, farm-bestrewn valleys beneath, where dogs barked a-night and cocks crew clarionlike in the dawn.

But here, as Frances stole on into a little circle of blanched and moonlit crags which rose out of the bald plain, casting long jagged shadows, like a lunar crater, she shuddered a little as she felt the darkness of the narrow gorge closing suddenly about her. Then with a sense of relief she emerged again into the circle of low sierras, the teeth, as it were, of the extinct volcano.

There, there—quite near her, because the circle of pallid rocks measured nowhere more than two hundred yards across, were men who crawled nearer and nearer to a certain point on the opposite face of a natural amphitheatre.

She saw the glitter of their accoutrements as they glided on. A horse neighed quite near by, but unseen because hidden somewhere beyond the rock circle. Another shook its headgear as it cropped, as if fretted by the narrow radius of a head rope.

Suddenly on a rock, flat on top like a table, she saw a man spring erect and throw up his hands. He showed black against a slate-blue horizon. Instant to the signal here and there half-a-dozen shots went off, clanging loudly among the rocks and reverberating

from innumerable narrow gorges. A horse screamed with pain, and at the sound Frances ran forward in time to see the dark crawling figures raise themselves erect and rush upon a group of waggons and horses encamped some distance out on the plain.

It seemed however to be no surprise, for flashes of fire met them here and there as they ran. Horses snorted and stampeded—men rising as it seemed from the ground, and clinging wildly to their ropes and head-stalls.

There was no shouting on either side. Only a knot or two of dark bodies writhed and struggled on the ground, and anon grew still.

The camp of Pierre, the King's waggoner, was in the hands of the assailants sooner than he had anticipated. He himself lay gagged and helpless while the Camisard leaders investigated first the royal marks on his waggons, then the commissions in his pockets, and last of all the official seals which had been set upon his casks of wine.

A dark lantern was flashed upon the faces of the three prisoners.

"Let us question the servant," said a tall, red-bearded man, evidently a leader among the assailants. "We will make him tell us what the King's wine and the King's waggoners are doing here so far from the Marshal's camp. What mischief does this portend? We must find out and that suddenly."

"Kill the accursed of God—I bid you, brethren, the enemies of His people!" commanded another voice sternly. "Let them that carry the wine for the lips of evil-doers drink of the cup of wrath and anger and trembling. Kill—I say—kill! Cast body and soul quick into hell!"

And among that throng of fierce grave men there arose an ominous murmuring.

"Well spoken, Catinat the Prophet, cursed is he that spareth the oppressor! Shall aught but iron break the Northern iron? Hearken to the prophet Catinat! He speaks truth and wisdom!"

Then Catinat, of the folk called Camisards, lifted up his voice and prophesied aloud, glad that for once his words were listened to.

"Hear ye, people of the heath and of the high-parched places in the wilderness, God hath appointed to us four torments for our sins—the sword to slay, the dogs to tear, the fowls of heaven to devour, and the beasts of the earth to destroy. But He hath also given His people power to break the sword, to kill the ravening dogs, to take the fowls in a net, and to destroy the evil beasts from off the face of the earth!"

And again the murmur rose, low, deep, and full of anger, "Kill! Kill! Have they spared us? Have they not slain young and old alike, the mother with the babe, both grey hair and goldilocks? The accursed of God shall not live half their days!"

The tall man with the red beard had meantime been interrogating the gipsy. But he could not get Billy Marshall beyond the muttering of threats and oaths in an unknown tongue, which sounded profane even to his questioner.

"I can make nothing of him. He is either a fool or a madman!" he said at last, rising up from his knees. "What is your will, men of the Bond? Shall these die?"

"Aye, let them die!" cried the crowd, pressing fiercely forward, each with a weapon in his hand. And Catinat added, "They are of the Canaanites who must first be cut off from the promised land ere the people of God shall have rest therein!"

But before a weapon could be unsheathed, the light

figure of Flower-o'-the-Corn flashed through between them. Her father's Geneva cloak was about her. The oblong white bands of the fully-ordained preacher still depended from underneath the broad collar.

"Stay," she cried, "Brothers of the Bond, ye shall not do this deed of shame. These men are innocent—at worst, they are but servants of those that do us evil. Remember Him who said that all they who take the sword shall perish by the sword. And remember also Him who restored the ear of the high priest's servant which Simon Peter cut off."

This appeal was precisely that which was best suited to influence the men about her. Frances Wellwood was not her father's daughter for naught.

"I ask not that the two men and the woman shall go free," she cried. "Take them back to the village with all their horses and gear. Then, if they have done evil, if the guilt of innocent blood be on their hands, let them die the death. But let not the Brethren of the Bond slay the innocent in cold blood!"

"There is matter in what the girl says," cried one, turning the lantern about that he might see the effect of her words on his fellows; "back to the village with them! Let them be judged there!"

"Nay, let them die here and now," cried the Prophet; "pollute not the camp of Israel with their presence. As Agag brought evil to King Saul, so shall the sparing of these come between you and your righteousness!"

It was Catinat, the man who had claimed the right of prophecy, who spoke again, and seen in the light of the swaying lantern, the faces of the men changed and faltered even as he spoke.

Some were for mercy, and cried, "To the village with them! Let the ministers judge!" But there

remained a dark-browed minority, men of much suffering and many travailings, eye-for-eye and tooth-for-tooth men, who continued to edge nearer to the prisoners, fingering restlessly at their weapons.

The quick instinct of Frances Wellwood caught the movement. She drew her pistol and set herself determinedly in the front, standing almost across the prostrate body of Pierre the waggoner. In the feeble uncertain light of the lantern she saw that a cruel gag had been thrust into his mouth. She bent down and released the V-shaped twig, wrapped about with a handkerchief, which had been used to hold the jaws apart.

"At least let the man answer for himself," she cried. "Who and what are you ?—Speak !"

The waggoner was too much exhausted with his late rough experiences and present pain to do more than lift up his finger and point to the second of the three waggons, that which carried the largest cask of wine. It was marked with much distinctness : "For the private cellar of the Maréchal de Montrevel, a present from his most Christian Majesty."

"There," said Pierre the waggoner, hoarsely. "Let what you find there speak for me !"

CHAPTER VII.

The Chief of the Camisards.

Then was seen a wonderful sight. The plunder of a King's waggons by the Camisard peasants of the mountains.

"Respect private property! In Jean Cavalier's absence I command here!" cried the tall, red-bearded man. "Take only that which bears the King's mark."

Nevertheless the men actually sprang upon the great cask as it lay in its cradle upon the long waggon, and with hatchets, crowbars and other waggoners' gear for clearing obstacles from the road, would doubtless quickly have reduced the barrel to its component staves.

But Pierre the Waggoner, from where he lay, still bound (though now ungagged), upon the rough pebbles, said hoarsely to Frances Wellwood: "Tell them to knock in the upper bung; but, for the present, to leave the lower."

Instinctively the men obeyed, and this is what they found. Across the whole length of the great cask, just above the lower bunghole, a flooring or partition had been built. Beneath in the lowermost hollow there was still a sufficiency of drink to satisfy many thirsty souls—that is, if anyone had taken the notion to tap the King's puncheon.

But above, all was dry as a bone, and the Camisards,

with cries of joy, drew from its roomy depths a multiplicity of arms and gunpowder, packages of the best British manufacture, Genevan Bibles and Camisard banners with various inscriptions, medicines and comforts for the wounded, together with a considerable packet of papers wrapped in oilskin, and endorsed as follows :

To be opened only in the presence of the accredited Leaders of the People called Camisards and of our own Envoy and Plenipotentiary, Pierre Dubois, presently roulier at Roche-à-Bayard and Hoo.

MARLBOROUGH.
EUGENE.

By this time the small surprise party of fighting Camisards who had made the attack was reinforced by others, most of whom carried lanterns, and rough protected lamps of iron such as are used in stables and barns in the country.

Frances Wellwood stood beside the man whose life she had saved and looked upon the swarming multitude as each new discovery of arms and armament was made. And when out of the last cask (addressed to Monsieur the Maréchal de Montrevel) a small field-piece, completely equipped, was extracted, she became nearly as excited as the poor village folk, who, lifting their clasped hands towards the heavens, joined with one accord in the old Huguenot chaunt :

Jehovah ! Jehovah !
Croire en toi, c'est la vie,
Augmente nous la foi,
Amen ! Amen !

For the shining field-piece, with its inscription in

letters of gold: "*To our fellow-religionists struggling for liberty, from their Brethren of the States-General of Holland,*" seemed to bring these poor ignorant peasants, driven and harried by the great and powerful of their own folk, into one company with the whole Church of the First Born, militant on earth. At last they knew that they were not alone. The glitter of the polished steel barrel was more convincing to them than many embassies. The Lord's Folk, embattled on other fields, remembering Sion by other Babylonian waters, were not unmindful of them, God's poor persecuted remnant on the Cevennes.

And so the solemn chaunt went upward, mingled now with the weeping of women, now drowned amid the excited shoutings of men, as Pierre the Waggoner, mightily recovered by means of a draught of his own wine poured down his throat, piloted them through his stores, reserving only the packet done up in oilcloth for a future occasion. And all the while Frances Wellwood watched him, a strange remembrance or vague evasive something teasing restlessly at her heart.

As for Pierre the Waggoner he had recognised the girl of his waking vision in the Namur cornfield at the first glance, even while he lay there on the hard pebbles bound and at the point of death. But, perhaps remembering his small success in his capacity of aide to my Lord Duke, the thought came to him —"She shall know me no more as Captain Maurice Raith, but since she has saved Pierre the Waggoner, Pierre shall I be, and we will see if her heart is as hard here as it was in the camp at Namur?"

The process of disintegrating Pierre's stores was almost concluded when, with the fast brightening light of the autumn morning, breaking in waves of rose

and orange up out of the eastern valley whence the sun must rise, there appeared two men upon the scene. As they came in sight Flower-o'-the-Corn recognised the taller of the two as her father, and ran to him fleet-foot.

"Where have you been?" she cried. "Why did not you tell me you were going away? Are you returned safe and sound?"

These were a few of the hasty questions which the daughter put to the chaplain of Ardmillan's regiment, as she clung to his arm and looked up tenderly into his face.

"I am well—a little fatigued, mayhap, with being so long upon my feet," said the old man, patting her cheek, "but very greatly is my soul enriched within me. This night I have seen cause to sing songs of deliverance. Yea, my feet have trodden in a narrow way, pavemented with promises ripe and precious, and overhung with all the clusters of Eschol, yea, even the vintages of Engedi."

The dawn grew brighter, a cool lucid clearness. Frances looked about her with eager curiosity, to watch the wondrous sight of the pillage of the great waggons. And perhaps with yet more anxiety to see the face of the King's waggoner, Pierre of Roche-à-Bayard and Hoo.

But to her disappointment he had withdrawn himself along with the young man who had arrived with the old minister upon the camping-ground. The two were walking at some distance from the busy throng of Camisards, who, with the somewhat surly assistance of Billy Marshall and his wife Bet, were now harnessing the horses in the waggons, in order to convey the whole safely within the defences.

The village had emptied itself upon the plain.

The whole assemblage buzzed like a hive. And though the youth of undistinguished appearance and middle height, who now walked to and fro with the waggoner, had scarcely said a word, there was about him such an air of conscious power and command, that neither Catinat the Prophet, nor yet Roland of the Red Beard, had uttered a word after his arrival. Not that he gave any orders himself. On the contrary, he seemed rather to listen to every one and say nothing. He heard the accounts of the attack and of the intervention of the daughter of the Genevan pastor, with an unmoved countenance, his clean clear eyes of grey darting every way, and seeming to take in everything. As he looked at Flower-o'-the-Corn, however, something bright and youthful flashed athwart the too-early gravity of his countenance.

With the swift recognition and acknowledgment wherewith men of power visit each other, through all disguise this young man had discerned that Pierre the Waggoner was other than he seemed. The two withdrew together, and in five minutes the sealed oilskin packet of instructions had passed from hand to hand.

The young man was about to tear it open when Maurice Raith directed his attention to the superscription written in my Lord Marlborough's own hand : "*To be opened only in presence of the Accredited Leaders of the People called Camisards.*"

The young man laughed lightly and even a little scornfully.

" Ask them," he said, with a wave of his hand to the men of La Cavalerie; " the Camisards of the Cevennes have but one leader, and the name of him is Jean Cavalier."

He bowed a little mockingly as he spoke.

The disguised waggoner of Roche-à-Bayard and Hoo fell back in astonishment.

"You!" he cried, "you! Why, you are but a boy. You are never that Jean Cavalier before whom the best generals of France—the Maréchal de Montrevel himself——"

"No, not I," said the young man, gravely lifting his hat, "of a truth, not I—but the God of Battles, He hath given us the victory! I myself am nothing. The men are good fellows and willing, but with little training. Still they will follow, and so the great thing is that someone should lead. I do as well as another. Never have I seen a hope so forlorn that I could not find ten men to follow me. And you who are a soldier know that when ten men arrive upon any one place, in which there are ten already, there is not room for twenty. One band or the other must leave. I take care that it shall not be mine. That is all."

"You have enunciated a great military truth," said Maurice Raith; "and one which my Lord Marlborough constantly practises in his campaigns. But I have one thing to ask of you, General Cavalier——"

"I am no general," interrupted the youth, flushing a little at the name, "only a poor lad of the Cevennes. I claim no rank and use none. I am even as the others; only because I lead them—well, they are content to take their orders from me, that is all!"

"And what more would you have?" said Maurice, smiling; "you have the advantages without the disabilities of rank."

"You had, I think, something to ask me?" said Cavalier, as if unwilling to discuss the subject further.

"Only this," said Maurice Raith; "I have made you acquainted with my rank and credentials. You

know that I am fully empowered to treat by the Allies. But it will, as you must perceive, be most hampering to me to be known for what I am. Let me remain, then, save to you and those whom you deign to honour with your confidence, no more than poor Pierre the Waggoner of Brabant—a sympathiser indeed with your cause, as indeed I am—but only an instrument to carry out the designs of greater men."

"Your incognito shall be safe with me," said Cavalier, courteously; "I see your point. You have to carry back our answers to the Duke, and it may be (if things march prosperously) return again to these mountain tops. I give you my word that your wish shall be respected. It will not cost you much loss of luxury. For we are poor folk here on the Causses and could give Prince Eugene or the Commander-in-Chief himself but little better accommodation than that which Pierre Dubois, the waggoner, shall share with us."

"Nevertheless, you will guard my secret," repeated Maurice, anxiously; "and especially (I have my reasons for asking it) from the Genevan minister presently sojourning with you, the Pastor Wellwood."

There was an unmistakable air of relief on the face of the young leader of the Camisards as he gave the promise required of him.

"You will not take it ill, then," he said, "if after this occasion I treat you somewhat distantly, and if my orders to you are even as those which I give to my own men?"

"I thank you," said Maurice Raith; "I have been for a long season under the personal commands of my Lord Duke, and, heaven knows, they are plainly enough expressed."

The two young men laughed and parted, Cavalier calling after Maurice that all his equipment would be

found in the stables of the Templarie at La Cavalerie, and that he was to report if, by mischance, anything was lacking.

"I do not wish," he said, "that when you return to your masters you should have to report to them that we of the Cevennes are thieves and robbers!"

Whereupon Pierre of Roche-à-Bayard and Hoo saluted and fell in at the tail of his displenished waggons. The young Camisard leader looked about him for his companion of the past night. The pastor was standing in close speech with his daughter, both of them looking away thoughtfully into the orange distance.

As Maurice Raith glanced back over his shoulder, young Cavalier crossed towards them, walking quickly and eagerly. The sun rose.

CHAPTER VIII.

My Daughter Yvette.

The village of La Cavalerie lies well out upon the plain face of the great Causse of Larzac, where it turns upwards like that of a dead man to the skies.

Four roads cross each other there, and the strange mamelons and ridges of rock surrounding it constitute natural defences which for many years had been assiduously strengthened by the Camisards.

Originally La Cavalerie had been a possession of the Knights Templars, and part of the walls were still intact wherewith the military monks had made themselves a fortress and house of defence in the wilderness.

As Maurice Raith approached the place for the first time he saw a wonderful sight. Hundreds of men, women, and children were engaged in building up, even as the Israelites had done of old time, the bulwarks of their Zion. The men had their guns and swords close at hand as they worked. Many of them wielded the trowel or mixed the mortar with pistols in their belts and basket-hilted swords a-swing by their sides. Thus, for many years, were the high Cevennes held against the King.

The women were hastening to bring lime and sand. The very children fetched water in pails, or as though they played a game, carried building stones

on handcarts. All were busy at the great work under the direction of experienced masons. Meanwhile, a little erected above the rest, an old man stood and intoned a chapter of the Bible in a loud voice, or with uplifted hand led the solemn psalm.

There was an earnestness and purposeful energy about everyone, that struck Maurice Raith, even though as a military man he could not help observing the mean character of the workmanship when compared with the square solidity of the bases laid by the Templars.

Yet for all that, he understood that these Camisards were men building by faith, setting bulwarks about Zion, and establishing so far as in them lay the temple of God and of righteousness. Round the village extended a system of trenched and covered ways, most curious and wonderful for that time, under cover of which the villagers had long defied the attacks of their enemies.

The entrenchments, as Maurice soon observed, were laid out with the eye of a natural soldier, and the aide of the Duke of Marlborough soon found himself thinking with more respect of the armed peasants who could thus keep at bay the soldiers of the first military power in Christendom.

Presently, however, being a young man, Maurice Raith thought of other things besides the military ordering and entrenchment of the village of La Cavalerie. The brightness of the morning, the glow of noon, the purpling dusk of eve are presented to youth for other purposes than simply as so much time in which to prosecute a vocation. At least, so Maurice thought, and the heart within him leaped up with a certain rejoicing to know that he was so near the girl who of all others had power to move him.

For Flower-o'-the-Corn as well as for Maurice Raith the night had been a disturbed one. He would therefore leave her to her repose till the evening. Then it was certain that she would come out to breathe the high air of the Causse, with the clean tart grip in it. When that occurred he would be near to thank her for having saved his life. That would be an opportunity not to be lost. Moreover, he would find out whether or no she had recognised him in his disguise.

Yes, that would do. In the meantime—for even a young lover (or what is even more one-idead and restless, a young man who desires to be a lover) must discover some way of making the time pass—he would take up his staff in his hand and endeavour to obtain a general knowledge of the system of defence by which a few peasants had kept the King of France and his Marshals at bay for so many years.

Maurice Raith had scarcely set foot upon the wide closely-cropped space which in an English or Scottish village would have been called the "green," before he was hailed from afar by his sometime henchman, Billy Marshall. The corporal of Cameronians was standing by one of the cart-wheels with a carefully-packed bundle of clothes on the ground before him. A dozen men were round about him. He carried a huge thorn stick in his hand, and was making valiant passes to defend his position.

"Maister," he cried, as soon as he caught sight of Maurice, "thae black-yards willna even let your honour's breeks alane—no, though I hae telled them till I am tired that they are a' ye hae to cover your nakedness, and Bet has gi'en them the office in their ain lingo! *Wad ye then! I daur ye to come ner!* Haud aff there—unless ye want your croon crackit

by this best o' black-thorns that ever grew on the banks o' Dee ! "

A man with the blood trickling down from a broken head came running to Maurice, holding a cloth to his brow.

" This mad fellow of yours," he said in rapid and imperfect French, " will not give up your clothes to be brushed. I had the orders to attend to your outfit from Jean Cavalier himself. I dare not face the general unless I can inform him that I have obeyed his instructions. Yet this savage has broken my head for me—the head of an old soldier of His Majesty's Guards and a good Protestant of forty years' repute."

Maurice laughed a little, but instantly checking himself by the remembrance of his self-chosen state as Pierre the Waggoner, he apologised humbly, hastening to patch up the wound, and attempting at the same time to pacify the belligerent Billy

But this was somewhat easier said than done. For the deeps of Billy Marshall were roused by what he considered the uncalled-for and shameless plunder of his master's goods and chattels. He felt that so much good and warlike gear was being deliberately thrown away on a pack of psalm-singing knaves. And he refused to be at amity with the good Protestant and ex-soldier of the King.

" Haud oot o' my road," he cried, waving his cudgel, " ye lang-leggit, splay-fittit, wooden-jointed atomy ! Wi' yae skite o' my rung I'se ding ye into eternity. An' whether it be i' the bad place or the guid, gosh—I'm nane carin', sae be that ye are ta'en oot o' my sicht. Leave my maister's claes alane, I tell ye, or I will tak' the law o' ye—faith I will, wi' this verra rung ! "

So with Bet on one side, and Maurice Raith on

the other, the wrathful Billy was finally removed to the stables, protesting all the way that he was more than a match for all the "cheatery Frenchies" in creation, and that so long as he remained above sod no frog-eater or other "foreigneerin' puggy" would touch so much as a shoe-latchet or a shirt-button belonging to so noble a master.

By this time it was more than suspect that Master Billy had been looking upon the redness of the wine which remained in the lower part of my Lord Marlborough's false-bottomed casks.

The tall and somewhat dignified man who, after the rescue of Maurice's uniform, had drawn upon himself the gipsy's anger by continuing to follow them to the stable, now came forward again, as if to offer some advice.

"I would advise you to take yourself off," said Maurice; "my man is somewhat irritable and uncertain, at best. He is not acquainted with the language, and is apt to take offence, even where no offence is meant. I am obliged to you, but his wife and I will attend to the horses ourselves."

"But," said the man, speaking in a hesitating manner, and in a tone of apology, "in this stable are also my own horses. Who will see to them? I cannot accept that favour from your lordship."

"Whose horses are they?" said Maurice, much astonished, for indeed, he had not yet visited the stables of the Templarie of which the general had spoken.

"Will your Highness do me the honour to enter?" said the man, taking his hat from his head. "I am the hosteller of this place, and I have the commands of Jean Cavalier himself to lodge both you and your equipage."

The young man descended certain steps of stone, a little crumbling and hollowed out in the middle with use and wont, and so presently found himself in good wide stables. The floor was of hard-trodden earth, black and glossy like a blacksmith's apron, not at all like the limestone of the Causses or the floury footing which it naturally makes when crushed into dust. There was plenty of light, however, for on the further side the stables gave upon a little steep ravine, or cleft in the Causse—and withal a cheerful sound of horses moving their blinkers and headstalls as they jerked their necks upward and whisked about the more easily to reach their feed-mangers or the hay in the racks above.

On pegs here and there hung saddles and accoutrements of war all ready for use, for the Camisards obtained many of their most celebrated successes simply by the speed with which they were able to move from one place to another.

Still higher, rows of iron head-pieces winked, as the level shafts of sunlight fell through the narrow triangular openings in the wall above each horse's head. At the upper end, in the widest and best stalls, were placed in order the nine horses of Pierre the Waggoner, while opposite, in a kind of square alcove, empty, swept and garnished with good clean straw, Billy the gipsy and his wife Bet had made their encampment. The package of clothes which had been the cause of the loud disagreement without, was carefully stowed away in the corner behind Billy. Maurice recognised the bundle as the one which contained his best staff uniform, which he had taken with him at the last moment, with some vague idea that the possession of it might tell in his favour, if he should be apprehended as a spy. It had, however, been

enclosed in the same hiding-place as the field-piece sent to the Camisards by the States-General of Holland, so that the chances were small indeed that it would have done him much good if he had fallen into the hands of M. the Maréchal de Montrevel.

Maurice saw to it first of all that Billy and his wife were made comfortable, according to their simple and easy standard. It was the custom at that time in all the inns of the South of France that the waggoners should lodge in the immediate vicinity of their horses, or even if need were in the stalls along with them. But at the Auberge of the Camisard village of La Cavalerie, the stables were on an unusually bountiful scale. The inn, standing as it did at the intersection of four highways, had been before the outbreak of the wars of religion a notable house of call for just such men as Pierre the waggoner. Past its doors had defiled all the rich wines of Herault, St. George, and Mont Arnauld, on their way to Clermont Ferrand and the chilly wineless north.

In these regions, as also in Spain, only travellers of the highest consideration ever thought of ascending to the second floor, where dwelt, in state semi-baronial, the innkeeper and his family. And it was, though Pierre knew it not, a proof that some hint of his quality had already leaked out, that he received this invitation from his host of the Bon Chrétien.

In time Billy Marshall was induced to lay himself down on the straw. They left him using the bundle of Maurice's regimentals as a pillow, and even in sleep denouncing fire and slaughter against any one who should attempt to despoil him of it.

As was her custom, Bet composed herself stolidly to watch her husband through the hours of the day till it should be his lordly pleasure to wake. She her-

self had tasted nothing since the night before. Yet she never once thought of preparing food for herself which Billy would be unable to share. So, since it was his pleasure to fall asleep in the daytime, she would sit and watch that no harm befel him in these strange places, perfectly assured that her lord, awaking to find himself in a strait betwixt the deep sea of a racking headache and the devil of a temper, would certainly inflict corporal punishment upon her for that, which it had been as far from her power to prevent as it had been out of her wish to share. A true masculine and legitimate conception this of wifely duty—ancient as the stone age, and which shall endure fresh and unbreathed upon unto the eve of the Judgment Day.

At the invitation of Martin Foy, landlord of the Bon Chrétien, Maurice mounted the stairs, which ascended circularly from the darkest corner of the stables.

To those unacquainted with the plan of such southern houses, it might have been remarkable how quickly the remembrance of the strange entrance-hall beneath was blotted out. At the first turn of the staircase the ammoniacal stable smell was suddenly left behind. At the second, there in front of the ascending guest was a fringed mat lying on the little landing. At the third Maurice found himself in a wide hall, lighted from the front, with an outlook upon an inner courtyard in which was a Judas-tree in full leaf, with seats of wicker and rustic branches set out. Here and there in the shade stood small round tables, pleasantly retired, all evidencing a degree of refinement to which Maurice had been a stranger, ever since he left those inns upon the post roads of England which were justly held to be the wonder of the world.

But notwithstanding, and considering that he was in

one of the most remote corners of France and had just mounted up from a stable, what wonder is it that Maurice stopped suddenly aghast when, at the opening of a door, a girl stood before him, one hand still resting on the handle, her dark and graceful head turned with some surprise in the direction of Martin Foy and the guest he was bringing with him.

The light had subdued itself to a certain placable green lustre through the dense foliage of the Judas-tree, from which most of the blossoms had long vanished. It touched the girl's cheek with a graceful pallor. She wore a dress of some rough-surfaced stuff, excellently made, which fitted every curve of her lithe young figure. Motionless as she was, there was yet about her a suggestion of something excessively active, vigorous, feline—not, be it understood, the slow lazy grace of the cat, but rather the felinity of the tail-switching leopard, or of the ounce lying outstretched upon a branch ready to spring upon its prey.

She wore a single pomegranate flower, red as blood, among the heaped and copious masses of her hair. It gave to her dark beauty a certain Spanish suggestion, and indeed she needed no other ornament.

"My daughter Yvette!" said the landlord of Bon Chrétien for all introduction.

The girl did not move at all. Only her red lips parted slightly, and she threw into her great black eyes something for a moment personal to Maurice Raith—something also that he never forgot.

"This is that Monsieur Pierre, of whom you have heard," said Martin Foy; "he for whom I have been commanded to care (to the everlasting honour of this house) by Jean Cavalier himself, during his

sojourn among us. He has brought us both arms and despatches from our allies of the north, and for this I beg of you, Yvette, my daughter, to do him all honour."

"Indeed," entreated Maurice, who foresaw difficulties if the landlord should go about introducing him as the accredited ambassador of the allies, "I who am come among you am but the servant of a servant—one Pierre of Roche-à-Bayard and Hoo; I am no great person—a poor Flemish carter only, and deserve but your plainest cheer and most common welcome."

But even as he spoke he was conscious that the girl's eyes were upon him. A smile slowly formed itself upon her lips, which of themselves were gracious, knowledgeable, though also more than a little scornful.

"Let me see your hands," she said, suddenly.

Maurice Raith, struck with quick fear that he would not be as successful in preserving his incognito as he had hoped, obediently stretched out his hand. She did not take it in her palm, but let it lie lightly on the back of her wrist. She even raised it somewhat nearer to her eyes, which, like most of those with great dark pupils, were a little short-sighted. To Maurice it seemed that the whole operation had as little heart in it as when a surgeon examines a skull or other interesting preparation connected with his art. Then with her other hand she turned the young man's fingers over, letting the tips rest a moment on the soft palm of her hand, not caressingly, but more as if she had been making an experiment.

Then, quite suddenly, she lifted her eyes to his, and gave him (as it were) full-point-blank volley. They were not broken bits of the blue of heaven forewandered and lost like the eyes of Flower-o'-the-Corn.

Rather great, storm-dark, ultra-passionate they seemed, the kind of eyes which for ever swim in tears that are never shed—angry tears mostly, yet capable, too, upon occasion of melting into singular, unexpected tendernesses, invincibly touching because so rare. Such were the eyes into which, all without warning, Maurice found himself looking at the head of that winding staircase, above the great limestone-built stables in which the horses were stamping and Billy Marshall was snoring out his uneasy slumbers with the faithful Bet watching at his head.

"Ah, Master Pierre—Master Pierre, the roulier, the carrier," trilled the girl, half laughingly, half scornfully, "good Master Waggoner—I am glad to make your acquaintance, excellent Pierre of Hoo and—where else did you stable your honourable horses in your own country?"

"And I also am honoured," said Maurice, speaking roughly; "it is a pleasure to me to be here. The wine is better and the girls are prettier than they are in my part of the country. What more can a man want? And that reminds me—upon my word I had forgot, go bring me a can of the best, lass. Wine seals friendship they say—or because you are so pretty, perhaps you would prefer another way?"

He approached the girl with one arm outstretched, his whiplash caught up in the other, in the traditional attitude of jolly waggoners when they encounter the prettiest serving-maid of an inn. But Yvette Foy did not move an inch, nor did the half-scornful expression of her eyes change at all. Some time ago her father had disappeared down one of the many passages which led from the landing where Maurice Raith had met his match.

"I will see that your room is prepared," he had

said; "Yvette will show you the way when you are ready."

The two young people were thus all alone.

Yet in spite of this direct assault, Yvette Foy stood with her hand still on the latch of the door, through which she had come at the sound of feet upon the long turnpike stair.

She shook her head, as it were, more in sorrow than in anger.

"Ah, no," she said, "that might take in Frances, the pastor's daughter of Geneva, but not Yvette Foy. And yet you do it not that ill, good Master Waggoner, who have only a couple of blisters on your rein fingers where the skin should be hard as horn. And these pretty, dainty hands were never in any man's service, I wot. Who sends a useless fisher to the seas, gets back neither fish nor salt, says the proverb. And of a surety your fingers are too soft for good service either by sea or land."

She laughed aloud. So deep and rich was her contralto, that it was almost like the low tremolo of an organ. There was a certain palpitating quiver about it, which sympathetically thrilled the listener somewhere within him, somewhere very close to the seat of his being.

"Yet, all being said and done, you do your part not overwell, considering your opportunities," she said, "I, myself, poor Yvette Foy, that never had the chances of an orange-wench at a theatre, I could do it better. See!"

And she took the long carter's whip out of his yielding hand, set his broad much-worn hat on the back of her small shapely head, hiding the great heaped masses of her darkling hair. She snatched a great waggoner's coat, called a *houplande*, and threw it

about her shoulders, buttoning it with hasty nervous fingers.

Then she threw forward her right foot, and brought it down with a slight but unmistakable stamp upon the floor, holding the whip at arm's length from her, the butt defiantly set upon the ground with all the airs of a devil of a fellow.

"Faith of a dog," she cried, "if you be not the prettiest girl I have seen in a quintaine of Sundays—strike my liver and lights if I do not think so! There! And there! And there!" she cried, kissing loudly on the back of her own hand. "Let that serve for a beginning, and now"—she flung down a broad Spanish dollar with the pillars of Hercules very evident upon it—"there is what will give us the wherewithal to drink to our better acquaintance! Take it up! Take it up!"

She dropped the cloak on the floor, gave her head a light careless shake so that the hat tumbled off of its own accord, and stood bowing before him, a quiet smile upon her lips and her hand upon her heart, after the manner of one who takes as a thing of course the applause of a crowded theatre.

"You see," she said, while Maurice stood before her amazed, "that is the way the thing ought to be done! Your performance was but milk-and-water to mine—and not a great deal of the milk even, Master Pierre of Roche-à-Bayard and Hoo!"

The young man remained mazed and abashed. He was silent, chiefly because he did not know how much this girl might know nor what might be her meaning in thus laying bare his poor artifices and concealments.

She bowed again more mockingly than ever.

"Shall I have the honour to lead your honour to your honour's chamber?" she said.

Then Maurice Raith—who, though on two occasions he had acted the ninny where girls were concerned, was very far indeed from being one—recovered himself. He would not be made a fool of by any slim-jim of an innkeeper's daughter on the Causses of France.

"Madam," he said, with a superb bow, "I am deeply indebted for the instruction you have afforded me, and I shall not fail to profit by it—when next I enter an inn, and find myself served by a pretty waiting-woman!"

He bowed to the girl with the gravest dignity. Had she been Sarah Jennings, Duchess of Marlborough herself, he could not have used more form and ceremony. He meant to convey to Yvette Foy of the Bon Chrétien in La Cavalerie that he was a gentleman, that he understood also that she was a lady, and that he was resolved to treat her as one. But the finesse, though by no means thrown away, was utterly rejected by Mistress Yvette.

"No," she said, pouting her lips pettishly, and patting the floor discontentedly with her little slippered foot, "that will not do. You cannot put me off with the pretty wholesome greens of the country. Cabbages and leeks and onions are excellent growths. But I have been brought up with them and have kept mine eyes open. You are a gentleman masquerading as a waggoner. I, on the other hand, am a little village girl——"

"With the features of an angel and the manners of a great lady!" said Maurice Raith quickly, bowing complacently in his turn.

The girl laughed, heartily this time, and not so contemptuously as before.

"Ah, that is better," she said, "and in that word you have confessed. All is right between us. I will

not betray you. You shall be Pierre the Waggoner to all the world an you will. But to me—— "

" To you ? "——he questioned, seeing that she paused.

" Anything you please," she said, with strange straight eyes and a fixed smile.

There fell a silence between them which endured longer than Maurice Raith felt to be altogether desirable. Yvette Foy appeared to wait for something to be said on his side. But since he did not speak, she reverted suddenly to her former scoffing manner.

" My father will be waiting for us," she said. " Permit me to conduct his honour the ambassador to his apartments ! "

CHAPTER IX.

To Love and to Hate.

The auberge of the Bon Chrétien in the village of La Cavalerie, in the district of the Cevennes held by the rebel Camisards, had on a time been the residence of the ancient Prior of the Order of the Knights Templar, he indeed who built the walls and first held possession of the town. The house was situated at the angle of the little Grande Place and towered above the other domiciles of the vicinity, even thrusting a towered and crenellated crown higher than the walls themselves—which not even the church did, but crouched low and squat as if protecting itself by its very insignificance from the cannon-balls of the Marshal de Montrevel.

As usual the innkeeper was the richest man in the little commune, though not for the usual reason. Martin Foy had not originally belonged to La Cavalerie, but, being of the Camisard opinion, he had transported himself and his family from the town of Millau some years before. It was whispered that his wife, now dead, had not been equally zealous with himself, and that she had lived long enough to indoctrinate the little Yvette with her prejudices in favour of Catholicism. But as to that none knew certainly. The young lady had, when she chose, both a pretty and a close-shut mouth of her own.

Maurice's room in the Bon Chrétien was large, and to the English eye somewhat bare. But the flower-wreathed balcony, with its outlook upon white road and grey parapeted wall, made up for all else. In the chamber they found Martin Foy with his own hands putting the finishing touches to the arrangements.

"You will find your sheets aired," he said, "and there is a bell upon the table which you will be good enough to ring outside the door if you are in need of anything."

"But," said Maurice, "this will not do. I am but a poor waggoner of Flanders, and I have no right nor desire to occupy the best room in the house!"

"Sir," said Martin Foy, bowing gravely, "permit me—for this cause left I the best paying business within the walls of Millau! For this cause counted I all but dross that I might win Christ. And shall I not give the best room in my poor house to the man who, holding not his life dear, brought the cannon from the States-General of Holland to these Poor Folk in sore travail on the mountain tops?"

As Martin Foy spoke there came instinctively a kind of chaunt into his voice, which Maurice had learned to recognise as the sign-manual of the Camisard prophet or high preacher. He could distinguish the rant (as he then called it) even under the polished accents of Jean Cavalier himself. The girl, who had paused at the door of the apartment, stood with her hands behind her back and an inscrutable expression upon her face. Maurice could not tell whether it was contempt or merely weariness. At all events, it was evident that Yvette Foy was not a sympathetic partaker in these things. She stood listening to her father with a kind of pride and defiant revolt, expressed

more in the turn of her head and the backward throw of her shoulders than in the expression of her features.

The chamber was wide, the bed being—as the custom is in these southern hostelries—retired within a curtained recess ; the red-covered sofa and centre-table, with its drooping tapistry, might have garnished the reception-room of a general on campaign.

It was twelve o'clock, and from beneath came the sound of a chaunted psalm. Martin Foy started, and went rapidly towards the door.

"It is the hour of prayer," he said ; "God forgive me—I had forgotten. Will you accompany me, and hear the new preacher from Geneva expound The Way ? No, you are wearied and would repose. Well, on a future occasion he will refresh your heart with such expositions of the true inwardness of Scripture as have never been yet heard upon the Cevennes. I leave you to my daughter. Permit her to find you the wherewithal to sustain the body, while I go elsewhere to seek for the better sustenance of the soul ! "

Yvette Foy followed her father with her eyes as he went out through the door. She did not smile. Rather there was an exceeding bitterness in her wide-open dark eyes. "Let us go out into the clean wholesome air," she said, "the caterwauling down there will soon be over. Or, rather, the animals will have shut themselves up in their cage."

Maurice followed her out on the balcony. In spite of her bitter speech, there was something intensely attractive about this girl. She seemed created for allurement. She walked like some Aholah or Aholibah, scarlet-lipped, lithe-limbed, certain of her attractive power, a woman against whom the prophets of Israel might have fulminated as against the idolatry of

strange gods. Even more she resembled Salome, the daughter of Herodius, as flushed with triumph she went out from dancing before the king. It was a thing wondrous to behold, this innkeeper's daughter in the little Camisard village high on the limestone Causses. Give her but silk for serge, red heels for home-cobbled shoes, and there had not been a prouder or a fairer court lady under the raying splendour of the *Œil-de-Bœuf*.

The balcony upon which Maurice and Yvette Foy emerged was not proper to his room alone. It went all about the house—except, that is, on the side which overlooked the street. Yvette led the way to the corner where they were most remote from observation, and pointing the young man to a seat, leaned her elbows negligently on the iron railing, her chin on her clasped hands. She watched him intently as he sat down at her bidding.

The question which troubled Maurice was this. "Where gat this girl so much refinement, so much of the air of a Court, so much of what can only be learnt in the society of men and women of the world? Not, certainly, in a little village, set close up under the stars and in the sole fellowship of religious fanatics?"

She looked into his eyes a long while steadily, and, in spite of himself, he felt his soul being drawn from him. For so it is when eyes such as those of Yvette Foy have that in them which needeth not speech.

"So," she said, slowly, without withdrawing her eyes from his face or allowing the spell to be broken, "have you come so far for so little?"

"For me, I do not know what you mean," he said, uneasily.

But all the same he did not look at her. And Yvette

Foy, the innkeeper's daughter, laughed a low resonant laugh, like the gurgling of water underground.

"No," she said, "it is not hid from me as you think. It cannot be hid. For I am not as one of the foolish women. I am no ostrich with her head in a bag. I see the thing that I see! And that which has brought you here is not, as they think, to bring these people a few guns, a little powder, and the greetings of their dear friends and noble allies—who, unless it suited them, would not stretch out so much as one little finger to help, if all the Camisards were dying of hunger and torture. This is not hid from a man like you—no, nor yet, pray do me the honour to believe, from a woman like me. Oh, I have no patience with such folly! A gun or two and a little powder—a few papers and gew-gaws! A decoration, mayhap, for our friend Cavalier, and, lo! the poor silly fools are all agog with the hope that next week Marlborough and the Prince Eugene will be camping out on the ridge yonder, and King Louis and all the Marshals of France sleeping in their deep graves! I wonder, sir, that you can lend yourself for a moment to such deceit! No, and you would not but that you come here—for what? I will tell you for what—to follow that pale pink-and-white daffodowndilly girl, the daughter of the Genevan pastor. Bah! I know you men. I could break her across my knee. She has no heart; she is an icicle, a frozen rush from the water edge. She knows neither what it is to love nor what it is to hate!"

She paused a moment. Her eyes had grown black as night—blacker, indeed, than blackest midnight. The great pupils seemed to overflow the iris circles, so that there was no white left at all. She breathed so heavily that her bosom heaved, not tumultuously,

but slowly and regularly, yet with a labouring cadence which affected the young man deeply.

"And I know both," she added, suddenly; her voice was hardly louder than a whisper, yet far-reaching like an echo in a great cathedral.

She rose up suddenly and fronted Maurice, who had hitherto stood entirely silent. He had never met anyone in the least like this girl before, and for the moment he knew not what to answer. At first, as was natural, he had thought that she was no more than a light-headed maid, willing to be made merry with by any well-looking man who should come her way. But already he saw how greatly he had been mistaken.

"Yes, I know both—to love and to hate," she repeated, and as she spoke she slowly approached Maurice where he stood. All about the terrace the creepers were red and purple. The pair were almost wholly hidden behind them, and it is not likely that Yvette Foy would have cared greatly in any case. Obviously some fierce excitement had taken hold upon the girl. Her hands worked convulsively, almost, as it seemed, rhythmically with the rise and fall of her labouring bosom.

"Listen!" she said, in the same low thrilling voice. "I have not spoken to a man—at least, not in this barred prison-house, for five months. What are these yammerers to me? God cursed me with a soul that would not be contented with hymns and chapters repeated parrot-like, or the grunting over of so many prayers a-day. Was I to blame for that? Did I weigh myself in scales or construct my own body and soul? Therefore He will be merciful. For I love my father, and I have none other to cleave to—none of the same simple

honesty, that is. Faithfully I have followed his fortunes. But at what a cost! Here for me is only deadness. The white bones of desolation rattle! Do you not hear them, too? You—you!" she seized him with quick vivid hands whose clasps left nervous impressions upon his wrists, "you who come from camps and courts and the society of the living. You know these are not my equals. These are no companions for me. The horses in the stable are better company. They do not prate. They do not prophesy. They do not deafen my ears with texts misquoted, misunderstood, and misapplied!"

"But," began Maurice, slowly, "is it not possible after all—that——"

He could not follow the lightning moods of this girl. Her flashing torrent of words, like some of her Caussenard torrents in spate-time, carried all before it.

She would not allow him to continue.

"I know—I know," she cried, almost fiercely, "you would say that these men and—their women—are better than I! Granted! You are right. Infinitely better, higher, purer. But the Being they call God made me as I am. I did not make myself. I did not so arrange the keyboard of my soul that these people could play nothing but discords upon it. I might have been like your China-of-Dresden maid down there, and seen good in all things. Only I am not. It was not so ordained. My father sent me to Paris to be educated—finished. (Here she laughed and spread her hands abroad.) That was when he was rich. The school was a kind of Protestant convent without the dresses and without the masses; by so much the duller therefore! But there was another maid in that prison-house—her

name, Eugenie La Gracieuse. Her father is now in the Marshal de Montrevel's army. And so long as she remained, she and I found a way to evade most of the restrictions of the place."

She paused to let memory run over the leaves of the past.

"I was there four happy years. I saw the great world. I heard men speak—men who were men—men like you. And at the end of it, I came back—to this—to this!"

And with a great sweep of disdain she enclosed with her arm the circle of little high-roofed houses that constituted the fortified village of La Cavalerie. So might Zenobia the queen have looked in the days of her captivity upon the villas of Tibur and the white flying leaps of the Anio.

She looked wondrously lovely to Maurice, this girl —vivid, pitiful, of an astonishing and most magnetic beauty, flamboyant in all the bravery of youth and sex, evident as a poppy in a cornfield—no Bluet, no simple flower, this—but with that of dangerous in her eyes which is so infinitely attractive to an adventurous young man like Maurice Raith.

Even as she looked, something seemed suddenly to melt in the young man's heart. It appeared to him that he had been sent on a special mission from the great world to comfort this forlorn girl—educated, allowed to taste the pleasures of life, and then torn from them to be plunged into a solitude. Yes, he, Maurice Raith, had obviously been raised up for that purpose. Also her eyes were certainly wonderful —that olive skin, at once clear and mat, without polish or surface or flush of colour, save only the lips of cardinal red laid like leaves of autumnal scarlet upon the ivory of her face Above, her heaped

hair in dark loose masses—beneath, eyes deep and lustrous! Yes, after all, why should he not? Some missions carry their own particular zeal along with them.

She was standing facing him and very near. There were traces of recent tears in her eyes. She knew or divined some part of his story, why should he not tell her the rest, and achieve at least one confidant in this place of stern religionaries? Maurice Raith, acted upon by the glamour of those dark eyes which looked so movingly into his, could think of no reason against it.

He made one step towards her. Yvette Foy started and a flush of something like triumph momentarily reddened her cheek. The moist suffusion of her eyes brimmed over. A tear overwelled, globed itself, was disengaged, and ran slowly down her cheek. Maurice's right arm was about her. He had a kerchief in his left hand. He knew not from whence he had obtained it. But he was wiping away that slowly trickling drop. Two great eyes, moist and luminous, were very near. They seemed wells of light now, though in themselves so dark. The face was very near. He seemed to grow dizzy in a mist of perfumed breath. The carnation lips were nearer still. The sight and thrill of them seemed to swallow up all else.

When suddenly beneath these two, standing thus, rose the singing note of a marvellous voice. Maurice let the handkerchief drop. He started back. Yvette Foy, left unsupported, staggered and would have fallen, had it not been for the iron of the balcony which she clasped with both hands. Her lips grew ashen pale with disappointment far beyond anger. The arrow had fallen aside even while it stood quivering in the white.

From the balcony Maurice Raith looked down. It

was a child's funeral—a mere babe whose life-breath had hardly been drawn, for whom there had been no hold on life, no pain, no merit, no joy, no sin—a God's child, its coming a mystery, its taking wing scarce a grief.

First in the procession came the old minister, the late chaplain of Ardmillan's regiment, in his bands and Genevan gown, the Book open in his hand.

Then all clad in white, fair and tall like an angel, Flower-o'-the-Corn followed, carrying (as was the Camisard custom) the babe in her arms, dead, sinless, also clad in white. It was her voice which Maurice had heard leading the burial psalm. He was too far away to hear the words of the French psalter, but he well remembered the tune. It was that which had always accompanied the ancient Scottish words of the hundred and twenty-first Psalm, the psalm of assured peace and purity. And they rose to his heart, well-nigh to his lips, as he listened to the clear voice of Frances Wellwood, whom he had called Flower-o'-the-Corn :

I to the hills will lift mine eyes—
  From whence doth come mine aid?
My safety cometh from the Lord
  Who heaven and earth hath made.

Thy foot He'll not let slide, nor will
  He slumber that thee keeps,
Behold, He that keeps Israel,
  He slumbers not nor sleeps.

Maurice stood listening to the rise and fall of the melody. The singer went by close underneath him. The tall old pastor, the slender white-robed girl, the little shrouded burden in her arms, passed rapidly across the square out of sight. The mourners followed the

father who looked down with set teeth, and the mother bent in grief, her face in her hands. After these came plain folk in twos and threes. Maurice lifted himself up with a certain heave of relief. Many things, the imaginations of the heart of a man, which ran like a millrace before, had fallen suddenly still and joyless.

He turned on his heel and went out without once looking at Yvette Foy.

CHAPTER X.

A Woman's Wits.

Properly speaking, Maurice Raith had as yet no soul. Soul is like character, a product, or, in the words of the Westminster Catechism, it is a work and not an act. It is not like life—an emanation. It is not a creation, it is a growth. And more than that, a man's soul is self-made. As the man thinks in his heart, so is he.

Already in childhood the foundations are laid. The site is chosen—moody or cheerful, inlooking or outlooking, morose or heartsome—the edifice fronting one way or the other, towards the sun or from it. Brick by brick it goes up, storey by storey, floor by floor, amid clangour and clamour, like that tall tower which once on a time overspied the plains of Shinar. How strong and sure it looks at twenty-one! How massive and impregnable at thirty! Yet who can tell? All depends on whether or no it is built within tide-mark. Are the foundations, after all, on the sand? Who shall say?

For one day the high tide will come, a sudden, far-extending sweep, a recurving of the hollow seas, a withdrawing as at Lisbon, then the returning arch and upward rush.

The soul of Maurice Raith was to be early tried His fates were kind. Even if it should fall, there was

time for him to set about laying again the foundations and building the tower tier upon tier, even after the earthquake wave had swept all away to one destruction.

Now nothing is more certain than that Maurice Raith had never known love. How, indeed, should he? Love, among other things, is the strife between that which is good and that which is better. A man has many choices of happiness. He may choose the best batter in his feeding-trough. He may arrange for the best prospect of a continuance thereof, for himself and his progeny. This is, all and whole, the philosophy of the Swinetrough, as it has been laid down once for all by the celebrated Sauerteig. And very good it is. A great statesman once declared that a man is never more harmlessly employed than when engaged in making money.

But there are other things which strike some men as worthier. There is a point, and God send that a man find it early in his career, when the Swinetrough is nothing to him, and the best Branmash nothing, when the Past and the Present and the Future are nothing, when Ancestry and Posterity are the same thing, so that a man may obtain the one Fit Companionship, drink from the one Delectable Cup, possess the one thing all precious and desirable.

This is the high mystery of the Eden choice, according to which the promise is still to Adam and to his seed after him. This is the eternal sweet in the cup of the Eden bitterness. In the sweat of his brow still shall the man do his day's darg. In wailing and infinite bitterness shall the woman bring forth. So it is written and so it must be. But this is the Divine makeweight flung by the Creator into the Counter-scale. Sweet shall ever be the honourable

Mating of Two—the making of Man and Woman One. Sweet, sweet, so it last, as the wise word saith, till death them do part.

But in his present mood this has little to do with Maurice Raith.

Yvette Foy watched Maurice leave the terrace where they had stood so close together beneath the blossoming purple creepers with a smile on her face that was by no means affected. All was not lost because the first coup had somewhat miscarried. She had, however, sufficient knowledge of men to make no further move that night.

It is true that the smile on her face became a bitter one. And as she betook herself to her needlework and her book, the twin scarlet lips were compressed more tightly than usual, and there was a certain hard and fixed look about the great dark eyes.

"A minute before I did not care about him at all," she murmured to herself, "and I do not now. I have other things to live for. But, of all people in the world *she* shall not take him from me!"

Round a street-corner came the far-heard chaunt of the child-mourners, the clear voice still leading it, a heavenly instrument such as angels might blow upon.

Yvette shrugged her shoulders disdainfully.

"She does it for effect," she murmured; "the days have been when I have done as much myself (she smiled at the remembrance); aye, and may again, if that is the way the wind blows. If she chaunts litanies I can sing psalms. She has made a captive of Jean Cavalier, so they say, the new prophet, the ex-baker's boy of Geneva, who came among us to deliver Israel from the hands of the Philistines! Well, we shall see!"

It is impossible to express the fierce bitterness

with which the girl spoke. There was a gleam almost of madness in her eye, the revolt of a keen and haughty spirit against surroundings more hateful than death.

All countries produce such, the widest democracies as well as the strictest theocracies. For, so diverse is the spirit of man, and so wayward also, that it is enough that the word should go forth, "Grow thou here and thus!" for some to yearn and strain to fill some other place, and grow up after another fashion.

But, perhaps, in all times rebels have been most common in the sternest and strictest theocracies. Rome, Geneva, and the Wartzburg have all experienced the difficulty—the company of Jesus and the company of the Jesuits alike.

Yet, to do her justice, it was only when such an one as Maurice Raith came in her way that Yvette Foy let herself go. She had a philosophy of her own in this as in all things. She had too great a contempt for the Camisard peasants who surrounded her, in spite of the fact that their midnight marches and sudden assaults were making all Europe ring with their fame, to lift so much as an eyelash upon them. Not even young Jean Cavalier, handsome, wise, courtly, polished, had so far moved her. She was no ordinary country maid, this daughter of the innkeeper of La Cavalerie. Indeed, it was her chief sin that she held herself so far aloof from common clay—her misfortune, too.

"I have the ill-luck to be born of the peasant's party," she said, "but there is no need that I should mix with them. I will pray with them, watch with them, endure long sermons with them. But I will not love them, talk with them, hold comradeship with them. They shall have my company just as

little as my duty and my father's business permit. And doubtless in good time my task shall be ended. If not by means of this young Englishman, why, by another! Not for nothing was I given such a face as that which I see in the glass yonder, on the day when masks were dealt out by the chief property-man."

And as she spoke she looked at a little mirror of greenish glass, opposite to which she always sat when at work, and which in a manner of speaking constituted her *prie-dieu* and holy of holies. Yvette had also a secret storehouse of books locked safely away in an empty escritoire—books which had been sent her by Eugenie la Gracieuse, her friend of the Parisian school. This private library included, amongst others, the Grand Cyrus, Clelie, and the latest volumes of the dictionary of Bayle—strange books to be found on the shelf of a Camisard girl in a village standing upon its defences in the wilds of the Cevennes.

From these she had learned the language of Marly and Versailles. Though still to outward appearance a poor girl, her mind dwelt constantly with dukes and princes. She walked the narrow corridors of the Bon Chrétien as if they had been the halls of the Hotel de Rambouillet itself.

It would have been hard to find within the wide limits of France a maid more thoroughly out of key with her life and surroundings than Yvette Foy. Add to this the girl's striking and fatal beauty, her own perfect knowledge of the uses to which that beauty might be put, and an early resolve to make a way for herself at all costs out of her uncongenial surroundings. The result could not fail to be dangerous, both to herself and to the peace of mind of eligible young men coming within her sphere of influence.

To do her justice, however, it was not the nature

of Yvette Foy to sit down and cry over the spilling of milk. Why, if one chance were gone, should she sit down and weep? On the contrary, she would serenely betake herself to the work of preparing another.

So Yvette Foy sat musing upon the young Englishman who had left her. She bore him no malice for his sudden departure—indeed, less than she had done a pet squirrel which that morning had escaped from his cage.

"Well, better luck next time," she had said, with a shrug of the shoulders. "You can hardly expect to win every trick of the game, Mistress Yvette. But no more will the Milk-and-Water Girl—that is one comfort."

For so she named Flower-o'-the-Corn as often as she thought of her.

She hummed a gay careless tune learned in Paris.

"Shall I then carry a hymn-book, sing psalms, take short steps demurely, abase mine eyes upon the ground? Oh, I could do it. Yes, I have done it before" (so she meditated), "but if I judge rightly, these things are not what this young man loves—a firm grip of the hand, a bold meeting eye, not too forward, but as a man to a man. These will take him, so be that he is worth the taking.

She held a knitting-pin in her mouth part of the time during which she occupied herself with this analysis of chances. Her eye did not once leave her work. She might have been a demure village Martha so long as she let her eyelashes lie quiet upon her cheek. But thoughts and intents quite alien to La Cavalerie were stirring in her heart.

She smiled as, looking out at the window, she saw Maurice Raith stride away across the little open square of the village, and round the newly-rebuilt

fortifications of the Knights Templar. He walked fast as if he would thus disengage himself from troublesome thoughts.

Yvette laughed, a little low laugh all to herself, not unpleasant to hear, it was so full of good humour and even mirthful appreciation of the circumstances.

"He must walk fast who would get away from *that* infection!" she murmured. And then, before dropping her head again upon her seam, she glanced at the dark piquant beauty of her face in the little green mirror.

"Yes," she said; "I am sure of him. He is too much a man of action to care very long for milk-and-water!"

Her father entered at this moment, sidling uncertainly towards a chair as if he had scarce a right to a seat in his own house.

"Well, Martin Foy," said his daughter, without raising her head from her work, or taking the trouble to conceal the novel which lay open upon the writing-table before her; "what news to-day of the wondrous baker's boy? Hath his excellency General Jean Cavalier defeated all the marshals of France and heated his bread-oven with their batons?"

The old Camisard shook his head sombrely.

"Yvette, Yvette," he said, in a voice saddened with much singing of psalms, and a manner chastened by habitual self-repression before the prophets and chiefs of his faith; "when will you learn to speak reverently of men great and holy? When will your hard heart be touched? Only this morning Catinat the Prophet declared that the time would not be long before Shiloh would come again to make glad his folk——"

"Pshaw!" cried the girl; "can you not see, father,

they are all mouthing fools! I am sad and angry to stand by and see you, my father, giving your hard-earned substance to such fanatics. What does Catinat know of any Shiloh? All he cares for is enough good meat to eat and wine to drink at your expense, and to lie in the shade and prate of Shiloh!"

"I am grieved for you, my daughter," said her father, yet more sadly; "for if you do these things in the green tree, what will you do in the dry? Nay, I have spoken concerning you to Jean Cavalier himself——"

The girl looked up for the first time, the blood flushing pomegranate-red under her dusky skin, her white teeth a mere line between her indrawn lips, her great eyes bright and dry with anger.

"You take too much on you, Martin Foy," she said, sharply and bitterly. "Go—keep your prating rogues from making havoc of your cellar and eating meat they are commanded by the Lord not to pay for. But for the future do not mention me or my affairs to any of your canting cronies. I have nothing to do with them, mark you—not with La Flèche, nor with Roland, nor with your Prophet Catinat; no, nor with your boasted Jean Cavalier himself, though I grant you that, in spite of his baker's oven, he is a bird of another feather!"

As the words left the girl's lips a young man entered lightly, doffed his hat with a low bow to Yvette, and stood as if he had tidings to deliver.

Martin Foy leaped to his feet with a light in his dull sad eyes. The pensive resignation with which he had listened to his daughter was gone in a moment.

"Cavalier!" he cried, "Jean Cavalier! You do this house an honour! My daughter, rise and bid the greatest of our prophets and leaders welcome!

General of the army of the Lord, younger Gideon of our host, my daughter bids you welcome ! "

The girl rose with a haughty and contemptuous gesture, her eyes still flashing angry fire. She swept the young man a courtsey, to which he responded with an equal austerity, not too much and not too little—yet marking, as a man of breeding might do, his recognition of the unfriendliness of his reception, and his intention not in any way to presume.

" I am no General," he said, in a voice singularly low and pleasant, " and you named me rightly, Martin Foy, when you called me simply Jean Cavalier. As you know, there are no titles among us, the Brethren of the Way."

The girl stood still, the long train of her gown circled proudly about her, her head thrown back, regarding him. But Jean Cavalier bore her scrutiny unabashed, yet with all the singular sweet modesty natural to the man.

There was something altogether very winning about him. It was difficult indeed to reconcile the boyishness of his face, the crisp curls about his small well-formed head, the blush that came and went upon his cheek, and the slight, dark, downy moustache on his lip, with the reputation which he already possessed all over Europe as a veteran soldier, who had worsted great marshals, past-masters of war, and who had compelled the Court of Versailles itself to alter its methods of dealing with the rebel peasants of the Cevennes.

In person Jean Cavalier was not tall. On the contrary, he was only slightly above the middle height, but with a great width of shoulders and a body singularly well formed. For all that he could easily surpass all his contemporaries at military exercises and games

of skill. While still a baker's apprentice at Geneva, he had a revelation of how one day he would be led by the Spirit back to his native Cevennes, and there so strengthen the hands of his fellows, so aid and establish Israel, that the Folk of the Way should be made strong upon the mountains and be able to speak with their enemies in the gate.

But of all this the daughter of Martin Foy recked nothing.

"Has it been a good season for visions?" said Yvette Foy, keeping her eyes steadfastly fixed upon the young man before her.

Jean Cavalier did not blush. Neither did he seem put out for a moment. Steadily he gave the girl back eye-volley for eye-volley.

"The coming of the Vision or the going of it," he answered, with dignity, "is not mine to hasten or delay. When the Lord has work for His people He will make bare His arm."

The girl made a quick little gesture of infinite contempt.

"Oh, do not weary me—I know the jargon," she said; "the trick of it is too palpable. For a comfortable salary I could set up for a prophetess myself. A trance, a revelation, twenty texts taken at random——"

"Girl," cried Martin Foy, "do not profane the word of the Lord nor the words of them that speak by Him!"

"Aye! But do they?" said the girl defiantly; "were there not lying prophets of old who misled the people? Methinks I have heard of them—shepherds who caused the sheep to go astray upon the mountains——"

"That is possible, mademoiselle," said Jean Cavalier,

with the most perfect courtesy; "but I think if you will consider the deeds which God has been pleased to do by me since He brought me hither, you will admit that the Spirit of the Lord hath not altogether spoken in vain!"

"You have beaten General Argenton, and the poor old Brigadier San Privat," she said, bitterly, "and what of that? Is a regiment more or less aught to the master of armies? Shall Louis the King be less the King for a score of such victories?"

"Not less, but more," said Jean Cavalier, gently; "moreover, it has been revealed to me that one day I shall stand before Louis the King and not be ashamed! The King is still the King, and we hold ourselves his subjects all the more because we resist the persecutors who have blinded his eyes and led him astray!"

"An hour or two ago," she said, "I saw a company of those 'loyal subjects' dragging a cannon into the village. Was it, perchance, to fire salutes in honour of his majesty's birthday?"

Jean Cavalier smiled, almost the sweet smile of a child.

"I had not thought that his majesty had so whole-hearted an advocate within these walls," he said, kindly. "Martin Foy, we must be careful before whom we talk our secrets!"

Then he turned to Yvette Foy, and walking straight up to her he laid his hand upon her wrist. There was nothing of familiarity in the action, yet the girl winced and then stood stonily still.

"Listen," he said, in a low, soft, even tone, characteristic of him. "I have a message for you also, Mistress Yvette Foy. We of the folk called Camisards are no unfriends to the King—only to the priests and those who take the name of the King's authority

in vain. We will obey him, save in the matter of our consciences—save in the things wherein we have appealed to a Higher Tribunal, and, as it were, stand before Cæsar! Let this remain in your mind. For the present I hold no further word with you!"

He removed his hand from the girl's wrist. She returned to herself with a kind of shudder, but before she could speak the young man had bowed as formally as before and betaken him down the stairs of the inn of the Bon Chrétien.

Yvette stamped her foot in hot anger.

"So that is his power," she said; "and he would make me feel it—*me*—who condemn and despise all his prating crew. Well, wait—wait! There is this day and another day after this. He also is a young man, and though he is strong in his will-magic, I will break his will and his magic, both of them together. He shall crawl like a worm on the ground before me or all be done." She looked in the mirror, and the smile that the handbreadth of greenish Venetian glass reflected was not wholly pleasant to see. "I also have a magic older and simpler than he dreams of. He can cast his glamour on these ignorant peasants, mud-stained from the furrow. He can sway the listening assembly, I have heard him—breath—breath the power of the spoken word—the thrill of personality that passes out from a man! Others do great things because he wills it, I have seen it and I know. But just because the power goes out from him, he is left weak. All the more that he binds thousands to his will, he shall not be able to resist mine. For *I* will think and plot and wait! One day he shall obey me. The other—the Englishman—I shall have him also on my hands. He must not be thrown away on that chit of chits, the whey-skinned daughter of their

chief psalm-singer. Him I will play daintily, as the angle is thrown in jest to a full-fed fish in a carp pond. I will tickle him from the wrist. He shall be daintied and dandled to his heart's content. But Jean Cavalier!—ah! Jean Cavalier the Prophet—I will teach you to set your hand on the arm of Yvette Foy. You I will take with the strong hand! Your very soul shall be mine—mine—to have and to hold—or to throw away from me like a rotten fruit on the dust-heap of my vanity."

She plucked at the growing greenery of the balcony, where she had sat with the young Englishman. A spray of purple creeper came away in her hand. She shredded the petals one from the other and dropped them over the iron bars.

"So—so will I do with the soul of Jean Cavalier, because he hath tried to humble me; according to the power that is given to me, I will cause his prophecies to cease. I will shut his soul to the invisible. I will make him even as other men—he, who calls himself the leader of many. And at the last I will give him ashes in his mouth—even apples of Sodom, exceeding bitter fruit!"

As she spoke she broke into a trill of laughter, that rang through the mid-noon like the clang of alarm-bells, far-heard across the champaign.

"I declare," she said, "I also have quite caught the twang. I am preaching without knowing it."

* * * * *

And outside, upon the irregular pavement of the little street, two men met and greeted each other. Maurice Raith, still in his waggoner's blouse, uncovered and stood humbly before Jean Cavalier, who nodded slightly in acknowledgment of the salutation.

"When shall we go over the papers together?" said one; "there is the rendezvous near Cette to arrange for, and the time is short?"

It was the waggoner who spoke, humbly as if he asked some favour of quarters or victual.

"To-morrow night," said the other, looking carelessly into the distance; "bring your servant with you to my rooms. I think he speaks no French. We shall arrange all then. And he will keep the door. He can be trusted?"

"That I warrant!" said Pierre the Waggoner, grimly. "God pity the man who runs up against Billy with a sword in his hand and a door to keep!"

And above them, out of the high balcony of the ancient Templar's House the dark eyes of Yvette Foy looked after them.

"Men are such self-important ninnies," so she summed up her experiences. "Their bubbles are blown so thin that they need no pricking! They burst of themselves. As if every one with brains did not know that these two were arranging a rendezvous! It will be at his Excellency General Cavalier's quarters, doubtless. They would not dare to come here. No (she laughed aloud) *not here!*"

She stepped back quickly, for Jean Cavalier, as if drawn by the power of her eyes, turned suddenly and looked back towards the window.

From the safe shelter of the creeper-hidden porch she kissed her hand towards the retreating pair.

"*Au revoir*—my pair of brave conspirators!" she said, smiling with a large contempt. "'An I be not of you, I shall be with you ere long,' as the sparrow-hawk cried in at the door of the poultry pen."

And like a modest maiden she gathered her work together and withdrew to her chamber.

CHAPTER XI.

The Judas Tree Lets Fall a Blossom.

During these days at La Cavalerie, Flower-o'-the-Corn went about with a sweet smiling graciousness which won all hearts—all, that is, or nearly all.

Her father's lodgings were (as we know) in one of the old towers that overlooked the Templar gates. Opposite to them, in the corresponding tower which completes the other wall, lived Jean Cavalier, alone, as a prophet should.

But for all that there was much coming and going between the two towers of the gateway. For Patrick Wellwood, though making no profession of being a prophet, was rapidly obtaining a spiritual influence over the Camisards of the Causses, second only to that of Jean Cavalier himself.

His simple faith, his trained methods of studying and expounding the Scripture, his clear perception of the needs of a simple people warring for religious liberty, added to the remembrance of the days, not so long gone by, when his own folk of the South of Scotland (and he himself) had been hunted like the partridge upon the mountains, even the quaint flavour of his foreign tongue, won them over to a great love for the late chaplain of Ardmillan's regiment. Nor did his glaring squint do him any harm. It was taken rather as a sign of his power and abstraction from the

concerns of the world, and repentant Camisards, cowering in some dark corner from the whirlwind of denunciation from the pulpit, were terror-stricken by the infallibility with which the wandering right orb sought them out, and fixed in their hearts as with personal applications the rebukings of the preacher.

Meanwhile, Flower-o'-the-Corn went her ways from door to door, not as a duty, but because she genuinely loved all people of every rank and was interested in their affairs. It was thus that she had entered the household of one Joseph Moreau, an old soldier like Foy the inn-keeper, and a former companion of his in the regiment of grenadiers. Like Foy, this man had been touched with the strong sense of obedience to impulse, contained in the teaching of the Camisards. But, unlike Foy, he had come to the village of La Cavalerie to marry, and had there espoused a young girl still in her "teens." The little white-wrapped figure of the funeral procession was their first child, born but a day or two before, and already gone from their sight as if, after a trial, it had found the great world somedeal too rough.

Frances Wellwood's pity for the forlorn little child-mother showed readily in her eyes. It was that, more than the act of carrying the babe to the tomb, which bound these two to her. Beauty is never so beautiful as when it shows itself in the pitifulness of loving acts, and Yvette Foy, with all her cleverness, made a mistake when she despised her innocent rival.

These two women had never met till the morning after the day of Maurice's arrival in the camp. The little town of La Cavalerie was not at that time so closely shut up as to prevent a daily market being held in the square. It was there after the morning service, among the white-capped vendors of fowls and

vegetables, that Yvette Foy for the first time encountered Frances Wellwood face to face, and held speech with her.

It was not often that Yvette betook herself thither, either to kirk or market. For the most part she left the provendering of the Bon Chrétien to her father and the kitchen servants. But on this occasion she had deigned to accompany her father to an early service, in order, as she said, to hear whether this new preacher from Geneva had more to say for himself than their own prophets, who rambled among texts of Scripture like unbroken colts in a field of clover.

But Yvette Foy's chief desire in visiting the church at an hour so unusual was to take up a position in the vicinity of Flower-o'-the-Corn and study her rival as attentively as might be without drawing attention upon herself.

This she managed to carry out without difficulty.

The Camisard church of La Cavalerie was a plain oblong building, dating from the old wars of religion in the middle of the sixteenth century. There was no reserving of places. Each worshipper brought his own folding-chair, or, in most cases, knelt upon the cold floor in time of prayer, and stood like a soldier at attention during sermon. A few carried each his wife's prayer-stool, but this was accounted a badge of servitude.

Certain more occasional hearers, like Yvette Foy, had made an arrangement with the wife of the caretaker to store their chairs and Bibles for them. So, upon Yvette entering, the old woman hastened towards her with her folding-stool. The congregation was standing at the singing of one of those long psalms which in general were sung through from beginning to end without a halt, the rumble of the bass voices of the

men mingling with the sweet treble of the women in a minor harmony infinitely plaintive and memorable.

At the first glance Yvette noticed where Flower-o'-the-Corn had placed herself, which, as usual, was immediately beneath her father. For the old man, wrapt in some great meditation of his own, occasionally needed to be reminded where he was and what was expected of him. On more than one occasion he had given out his text, and then standing a moment to collect his ideas, had gradually become so entranced by the noble thoughts which the words of Scripture suggested to him, that he had forthwith shut the book and descended the pulpit stairs without giving utterance to a single word.

All which, among a people so superstitious as the Camisards, added greatly to his reputation, as a man who had dealings directly and by word of mouth with the Spirit of God.

Patrick Wellwood was standing in the pulpit when Yvette entered. He had been educated at Geneva, having chosen that seminary in preference to Leyden or Groningen because of its greater theologic freedom. For as a young man Patrick Wellwood had not belonged to the stricter sect of the keepers of the Law. Here he had learned French of that notable fluency and vigour which can only be attained in youth. Besides which he had spent by far the greater part of his life abroad, and so it was that he could speak to the Camisards of the Cevennes in their own language, with all the vigour and point with which he addressed the Presbyterian veterans of Ardmillan's regiment.

Flower-o'-the-Corn's eyes were fixed upon her father. She did not even observe that Jean Cavalier had placed himself directly at right angles to her,

side by side with Roland and Catinat in the place which had come to be reserved for the elders and prophets of the Camisard people. She only thought of the Commander-in-Chief of the Camisard forces as a young man who had shown himself willing to be kind and helpful to her father upon many occasions. And this counted for much with Flower-o'-the Corn. So much so, indeed, that she gave the young man a grateful nod and smile when he returned from conducting the old man to the pulpit, which he did with a sweet and humble respectfulness that (she thought) became him no little.

It chanced that Yvette Foy arrived in the church just in time to intercept the glance, and to watch the blood spring hotly responsive to the young soldier's cheek.

There was another who had observed the by-play—a dark-skinned youth in a wide blue blouse who stood near a pillar at the door. To him Yvette Foy turned with a mocking smile upon her lips. But he did not even observe her. His eyes were elsewhere, even upon the face of Frances Wellwood, now uplifted, like a flower which turns to the sun, as her father began to speak.

"People of the mount," he said, and the ring of his noble voice immediately dominated the place and the hearts of all the men and women therein, "ye have a fight to fight, eye to eye, and foot to foot. Ye think that all your striving is with the soldiers of Louis, but I tell you no. The enemy is within your own gates—at the lintels of your doors, by your own firesides. Repair the breaches of Zion, an ye will. The work is good. Make her bulwarks strong. But first of all be sure that there is not a traitor close to you as the beating of your hearts. I say, look well!"

And to Yvette Foy, entering, it seemed for a moment that he spoke of her. The wild wandering eye seemed somehow to search her out—the reverberant, tremendous utterance took hold of her. She shivered where she stood. But the next moment the preacher had taken a lower intenser tone. He turned towards the seats of the elders and prophets.

"Ye have done well, folks of the Cevennes," he cried, "better than well—eye-service, hand-service, lip-service, life-service. Yet many swerve with all these, when the heart is far from Him! So let it not be with you. Ye have tasted of the bitter cup, ye say, and truly ye have drunk your wine mingled with gall, vinegar upon a spray of hyssop. But be sure that ye have also the heart clean and new-made—the heart of a little child!"

At which Yvette Foy, no longer concerned as to any personal application, and the thrill of the first awe having passed away, looked about her curiously and saw the face of Flower-o'-the-Corn upraised, the child looking out of her turquoise eyes, and the innocence of a heart at ease speaking in that sole glance.

And Yvette smiled a tolerant smile as she looked.

"Was it possible?" she thought, that she should have feared to take count and reckoning with such a babe. Then with a deep fold of lace drawn closely about her shapely head and recrossed over her bosom, she turned her neck this way and that, thinking no more of the sonorous words of the preacher than she would of the roar of the wind in the caves of Mont Ventour, or the surge of a breaking sea upon a distant shore.

About her head she had wound a thin veil of finest lace, which contained and conditioned, though it did not conceal, her splendid hair. She knew

that her forehead was bright and broad beneath it, her lips marvellously red. There was no one like her in all the hills of Cevenne from Mende even to Beziers. Oh, yes!—the red-and-white stranger girl she had seen—she knew this Frances Wellwood. She would go and wait for her in the market-place. The damask rose is not afraid of the scentless immortelle.

So she rose unceremoniously in the midst of the sermon, laid her stool against a pillar, and with the air and carriage of a queen, passed serenely out into the hot sudden caressing of the sunlight, venting a great sigh of relief as the fresh warmth of the forenoon breathed upon her face.

The true spirit of Yvette Foy returned to her as soon as she had left behind her the dank morning heaviness of the little church. Glooms and fervours of the spiritual sort she had none about her, and, indeed, she recognised such in others only as useful factors in the game she loved to play. With all her bright cleverness, with all her knowledge of men, women, and books, in spite of the glimpses she had had of another life, the base of her nature was essentially a desire for the physical well-being of an animal. Herein lay the difference between the two girls. Flower-o'-the-Corn loved everything in nature. It was all fair and sweet to her—the green, waving fodder-grass, with the wind passing over it in swirls and waves of colour changeful as the sheen on shot silk, the keen verditer of the bitter wormwood, the barbaric brilliance of pomegranate blossoms splashed scarlet against a turquoise sky. These and suchlike seemed part of herself. They made her life vivid. That she lived on plain camp fare, that she had done so all her days, and never expected to do otherwise, detracted nothing from the pleasure she felt in being with her father,

in making him happy, and in gladdening with ready graciousness all whose lives came across hers. Every blown blade of grass on the meadow-leas, every head of sorrel sowing its plain-song russet seeds, every ascendent gossamer, with its little air-borne traveller, was part of the eternal gladness of life to Flower-o'-the-Corn. They were comrades whom she encountered as she went out and in. She saluted them as if they had been sentries, and they made her heart sing within her. These things were parts of her deepest religion, and she prattled of them gaily to her father, who did not even shake his head.

A very wise man this Patrick Wellwood! For his time and upbringing infinitely so. Yet it may be doubted whether he would have treated others after this fashion, if any had dared speak to him thus reverently of the wind among the white-aproned poplars, or ventured to bring him shreds of bramble leaves frost-bitten to a colour redder than red and more brilliant than orange, with awe-stricken faces as of those who from the mountain cleft had seen the back parts of God. On the other hand he did not talk to Frances, his daughter, much of inward grace or of its outward signs. He knew (this good minister) that none needed to look deeper than those sky-steeped eyes to know that the graces of sweet purity, of untouched innocence had their abiding-place there. So though, to the grave grim-faced men of Ardmillan's regiment, who came to his quarters of a night, he discoursed as one having authority concerning the "flinty hearts within them," "the resistance of the natural man to the work of grace," "the call effectual and the call ineffectual," to his one daughter he declared no word of these things.

"If I preach over long at any time," he had said when she was a little girl, "know that the word is not

for thee, beloved, but because *these* expect it so to be. Open thy Book and read there of Ruth and Boaz, or of the anointing oil poured out on little David, of the children who strewed palm-branches for His feet—or what you will! God, who made the Book, will guide the reader. So do, and let not the long preachings turn your heart from the assembling of yourself together, as the manner of too many is!"

Now, though Yvette, the daughter of Martin Foy the Camisard, loved some of these natural things also, she loved them otherwise. She rejoiced in the sunshine because in it her being expanded. The very tissues of her body changed with a sense of physical enlargement and well-being. She hated the winter, but when at last the spring came and the life-juice made the world new, Yvette had strange thrillings and impulses through her body as if she, too, were kin to all that expanse of bourgeoning greenery and pink-blossoming orchard.

But she rejoiced in such things merely as a part of the necessary well-being of the world—the warm-aired full-blooded gusto of things, in which she had her part as a creature who loved eating and drinking and lying long warm abed, even as others love truth, and self-sacrifice, and the Word of God.

Thus it was with these two who were now to face each other in the warm coppery glow of the little market-place, across which the early morning shadows still lay long and blue.

At the stalls there were not many things to be sold. No great choice had the good wives of La Cavalerie, a lamb or two from the Causses, long-legged and spare of rib, eggs in plenty, with late fruits and vegetables. The women sat crouched on their heels by their baskets, or with their small stores outspread regularly

upon the ground—onions, leeks, garlic, potatoes, ranged side by side, while a calf, tied insecurely to a cartwheel, bleated for the comparative freedom of the rough-legged lambkin, which in reality was to die as soon as he.

* * * * *

From the little Camisard Temple over the way came a chaunt, weighty and solemn. The market-women inclined their heads with willing reverence. They were all "of the Bond," and would gladly have been present, but what would you? The pot at home must be boiled, and who but they in these times could win the wherewithal to fill it? It was Friday every day of the week for such as they, poor folk—*soupe maigre* indeed they partook of, though they held not by the errors of Rome!

At last the worshippers were coming out. Morning song was over, the service had been of more than usual solemnity, because the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was at hand. Moreover the Genevan pastor had spoken at length, and as one having authority.

Martin Foy came last of all, lingering a little on the threshold for a word with the old man, who looked not a little grey and weary after the effort of preaching.

When, however, he did issue forth of the little church, Patrick Wellwood still held him by the hand, expounding the decrees of God as applied to the scheme general of events and to the lives of men, a thesis which naturally took some time to develop and complete.

The minister was, of course, wholly absorbed in the great solemnities of life. For himself he was very sure. Though as to every other man—why, to his own master let him stand or fall.

But Martin Foy, though a disciple both willing and

attentive, lost his grip even of the Divine decrees, at the sight which met his eye in the warm slantwise pour of the sunlight.

There, in the little Grande Place of La Cavalerie, the sun shining equally upon the sentinels on the walls and on the market women sitting like brooding hens in the white dust along the western wall, in the midst of a silence like that of Eden, there had happened a thing which was to affect the lives and happiness of all those with whom this history concerns itself, far more than the decisions of cabinets and the successions of great kingdoms.

Of her own accord Yvette Foy had crossed the road and was holding out her hand to Frances Wellwood.

It was near the great door of the Bon Chrétien, and as these two stood thus hand-in-hand, the Judas tree in the courtyard, wind-stirred, flung down a last belated blossom, red as the lips which in the morning sunshine smiled their sweetest upon Flower-o'-the-Corn.

She took Yvette's hand and smiled also.

CHAPTER XII.

The Spy Hole on the Stairway.

"I have heard of your so great kindness to our poor folk," were Yvette Foy's first words, her hand still lying warm within her new friend's grasp, "and my heart was touched yesterday when I saw you carry the poor dead babe from the house of Anna Moreau!"

Flower-o'-the-Corn blushed, and then suddenly smiled at the new comer brightly and cordially.

"It was kind of them to permit a stranger do so much," she said. And then, changing the subject, she added, "You are Mistress Foy, are you not? the daughter of the Hosteller who has spoken so kindly to my father at the preachings?"

"I am indeed Yvette Foy," the girl answered, "and one much honoured to make your acquaintance. Why have we not seen you ere this at our poor house of the Bon Chrétien?"

"Because—because," said Frances, her face breaking into a slow smile, "in my country it is the custom to wait for an invitation before setting foot across one's neighbour's threshold."

"But my father tells me he has often invited yours to sup with us?" persisted Yvette.

Flower-o'-the-Corn looked slightly distressed.

"I had not thought," she began, and then stopped

—" that is, I had not supposed you would wish to see me ! "

" And why, pray ? "

There came a dark habitually covert glitter into the eyes of Yvette Foy.

" Someone has been telling tales," she thought, and waited to find out who. But tale-telling, even in its mildest form of telling upon the tale-teller, was impossible to Flower-o'-the-Corn.

" Why, I heard," she said, artlessly, " that you were so clever."

Yvette Foy laughed aloud in her turn.

" You will not tell me who told you," she said ; " it is you who are clever, and I did not know it ! "

" Oh, *I* am not clever at all," returned Frances, simply. " I have only followed my father from city to city and from camp to camp. I know only men."

In her inner heart Yvette thought that to know men was not the least to be desired of accomplishments, but she did not say so. She only drew her arm through her companion's with a smiling happy air.

" *You* know men, the wretches ! " she cried ; " why you know as much as a baby ! "—" As the babe you carried yesterday " she was about to say, but checked herself. " Come with me, and we will enlighten each other on the iniquities and follies of men. For I, too, have lived among them, and if I have any cleverness it is to know them for what they are—dull-minded, hateful deceivers, or all cock-a-hoop because they have just killed a sparrow with a six-pounder carronade ! "

The two girls walked apart from the crowd of the market-place smiling and conversing. Such a pair for loveliness was never seen together—fair and dark,

cornflower and passion-flower, pearl and black diamond. But all the same they bent prettily enough inwards, their arms about each other's waists, whispering and smiling secretly, with the adorable simplicity of fair maids who know themselves under the eyes of many. So in the little Grande Place of La Cavalerie these two walked and walked apart, much as they might have done on the long terrace at Versailles, whence the green-moulded statues are seen standing shivery in the wet of the bleak night.

"Pity me," said Yvette, gently, "I have no mother ——"

"Nor I!" Frances answered with a quick sigh, instinctively drawing her new friend to her; "*I* know—at times it is hard for a girl. Do you remember her?"

"Yes, truly," said Yvette, "she held my father from this folly of his while she lived. And when she died—then it was he sent me to school in Paris, to be out of his way!"

"Ah!" said Frances, reproachfully, "do not speak thus of your father, if he is all that is left to you, as mine is! And, besides, my father says he is a good man."

Yvette laughed a little laugh, very deep in her throat.

"Yes," she said, scornfully, "a good man, doubtless; that is, to be *some one else's father*. It is very well for you, my fair lady, who go out everywhere into the world of men with your father, ever seeing new lands and the faces of new folk, and brave soldiers and great men—very easy for you to prate to Yvette Foy of fathers!"

"Nay, nay," said Flower-o'-the-Corn, blushing, "I know what you mean very well, but, indeed, it

is not so. There is no man anywhere, in highland or lowland, mountain or isle, whose company I would prefer to that of my father ! "

" Then the more fool you, with such chances ! " murmured Mistress Yvette under her breath. But aloud she said, patting Flower-o'-the-Corn's delicately-rounded arm on which her hand was lying. " Ah, one day you will change—one day, my dear ! There is a ship coming to you from over the sea. The sails of it are samite and the masts pure gold, as the old story tells, and its burden is love—love—love ! "

" I suppose love for a woman ? " said Frances, looking at her winsomely under her eyelashes, " since you fright me with such dreadful stories of men."

She sighed.

" Yet they have been very kind to me—some of them," she said, reflectively ; " and—and I have not always been very kind to them."

" That is the safest way to bind a man to you," said the voice of experience, " to be at the first a little unkind ! "

Yvette thought a little while, and then added, " Afterwards *not*—they tire of it sooner than the other."

Then catching a little fear on the flushing face of Frances Wellwood, Yvette put her hand tenderly about the girl's neck. " You need not fear, little one, with such a face as yours and those fatal eyes—love will come to you fresh every morning across the years, be you kind or be you unkind ! "

" Till we are old people, do you think ? " queried Flower-o'-the-Corn, who thought of the love of one only. Her heart beat a little thickly, she knew not why. " Will he always love me just as much as when I am young ? "

"Doubt it not," said Yvette, subtly changing her own thought; "he will always love you—that is, if you are wise. Only, do not be too early in fixing on the particular 'he'—that is all the advice I have to give you in the matter!"

A figure passed across the Grand Place, going in the direction of the Auberge of the Bon Chrétien.

"Who is that?" said Flower-o'-the-Corn, quickly. For a certain martial swing was asserting itself even through the blue blouse, the corduroy breeches, and hooded cape of Pierre the Waggoner of Brabant.

Yvette patted her cheek again.

"Ah, dearest," she said, most caressingly, "do not be in a hurry. You cannot expect your ship to come to anchor up here among these wild hills. That is but Master Pierre the Waggoner from Flanders—he whose barrels were ransacked the other night by our good honest friends of this Protestant village——"

"The same who brought the despatches and the cannon?" said Frances. "I was there—out on the Causses that night. He—he has never even thanked me for saving his life! I should like to see him again."

Yvette looked down and sketched a triangle with her toe on the ground. Then with mathematical exactness she constructed another on the base of the first, so that presently she had made a diamond lozenge in the dust.

"Better, perhaps, that you should not," said Yvette, in a low tone.

"And why?" cried Frances, with a kind of catch in her voice.

"There are things which it is not fitting for a girl to hear," said Yvette, still with her eyes upon the ground; "remember, I am older than you, Mistress Wellwood!"

Flower-o'-the-Corn turned instantly upon Yvette Foy and held her tightly by the wrist, looking into her face.

"You must tell me now," she said, earnestly; "I am no child. I have heard how men speak to men. He came once and my father bade him return. He will return. Why then should I not speak with him?"

The dark girl looked every way about.

"It is not safe to speak out here," she murmured; "come to my room and I will tell you!"

Really she only meant to gain time. She must fatally prejudice the young man in the regard of Flower-o'-the-Corn, and to this end she had made certain arrangements.

Now Frances, not being greatly interested in any young man, save that justice should be done one whom she believed innocent, went readily enough with Yvette Foy.

There was a private entrance to the Templar's house, by means of a low door in a little side street leading up into a circular tower in which was a stair. By this the girls presently ascended to Yvette's own chamber, hearing beneath them the clattering of many horses' hoofs as they moved restlessly on the irregular paving-stones of the stable.

At one point there was a little spy-hole through the inner wall, which gave immediately into the stable. Before this Yvette stopped, standing a moment on tiptoe daintily. For though she was tall, yet the spy-hole had been arranged for the height of a man's eyes.

Suddenly she clapped her hands lightly together. Something had fallen out beyond her expectation.

"Look, look!" she whispered eagerly to Flower-o'-the-Corn.

With something that made her ashamed in her

heart, yet for the present with no power to resist, Frances looked. There, immediately beneath, were—not Pierre the Waggoner as she had expected, but—the other two strangers whom she had seen at the capturing of the waggons out on the moonlit plain—a man and a woman. They were engaged in brushing and refolding a suit of military clothes. It was to all appearance the same which Billy Marshall had saved with such jealous care out of the sack of the King's waggons, and the pair did their work as if well accustomed to the task.

"See," said Yvette Foy, with a deep kind of silent triumph, "there, all unexpectedly, is the proof of what I brought you here to tell you. The man who owns that comes amongst us poor folk of the Cevennes *as a traitor!*"

With the quick eye of one who has lived all her life among soldiers, Frances recognised that the garments, which were now being swiftly folded and put away, constituted a complete officer's uniform of the Maison du Roi, or King's guard of the French army!

CHAPTER XIII.

Certain Spokes in Certain Wheels.

It was not for the moment a matter of supreme personal importance to Flower-o'-the-Corn whether the Camisards of La Cavalerie were, or were not, entertaining a traitor unawares. She had, indeed, interposed to save the young man's life, as she would have done had he been thrice a traitor, and of the most patriarchal age and commonplace appearance.

But that which disturbed Flower-o'-the-Corn was the knowledge that her father, the chaplain of Ardmillan's regiment, a British officer according to military rating, should also be in this place, disguised, and under conditions which she could not but recognise would bring him to the gallows if discovered—while at the same time she had been the means of introducing among the Camisards one who might prove to be a French spy, armed with false papers and furnished with easily-procured stores and muniments, such as had given an air of truth to his deceit.

By this time the girls were seated in Yvette's chamber, which was pleasantly situated on the third or highest storey of the Templar's house, the village being spread out far below like a collection of bee-hives.

"And why," said Flower-o'-the-Corn to Yvette, "if this man be really a spy of the enemy, as you say,

do you not denounce him to your father? Or, better still, to General Cavalier?"

A deep silence fell between the two young women. Yvette Foy looked straightly at her new friend, like one who in all her life has had nothing to conceal.

"That were indeed easy," she said, calmly; "it was my first thought. But then a French officer is a gentleman. I have no desire to see him torn limb from limb by a howling rabble, as he would be if anything of what we know appeared. And, secondly, he and his people are lodging in this house, so that I can have them constantly under observation."

"But General Cavalier—my father—the other Protestant leaders," urged Frances Wellwood, "they are constantly walking about and talking with this young man. They will betray their secrets to him."

"As to General Cavalier, as you call him," said Yvette, with supreme contempt, "the apprentice baker can attend to his own affairs. I am not his nursemaid. And as to your father—my dear, have no fear for him! The Camisards will listen to his preachings, but will tell him nothing material—not if he were to remain here a hundred years. Do not be afraid for him. Just because he is the one true prophet among the many false, God will send His angels to watch over him. Did I not listen to him this morning, and his words were those of a very man of God."

Yvette lifted up her beautiful eyes as she spoke. Her voice deepened. There came a kind of awe into that thrilling contralto, infinitely affecting to Flower-o'-the-Corn.

Nothing touched her so much as praise of her father. Lovers might tell her daily for years of her own beauty. Their praise was as the twittering of sparrows under the eaves. But this strange girl, the daughter of

Martin Foy the Camisard, saw deeper into her heart than any man of them all, and to win her passed by Frances to praise Patrick Wellwood.

Flower-o'-the-Corn rose impulsively and threw her arms about her new friend's neck.

"Oh, I shall love you dearly, I know!" she cried, with a kind of sob. "I have been so lonely here—a girl with no one to speak to except my father."

It was with a not altogether ungenuine emotion that Yvette returned the embrace. She could at all times command the outward signs of feeling, and in this lay her danger to others. For none are more easily imposed upon by sudden displays of sentiment than men and women of cold natures. Now Flower-o'-the-Corn was anything but cold. Her heart sprang to her eyes at a word or a thought. Her underlip quivered. The sensitive lines about her mouth were all a-tremble in a moment if she imagined that one she loved was slighted or wronged.

Nevertheless, till a woman has once known love and its capacities of sacrifice, there is always something about her a little hard. One traces the same thing, grown older and more bitter, in women who have loved and been undeceived. It is in its essence a distrust of men, a resolve to do without them—a revolt against the place they arrogate to themselves in the affairs of the world.

There was, however, nothing of this about Yvette Foy. She knew that she could not alter the scheme of things. In spite of all that women might do, men would have the upper hand in the world—at least outwardly. But nature (she knew) had gifted her with certain other qualities and capacities, which had been of great importance since the beginning of the world, and she was resolved that if men ruled the universe,

she would rule the rulers—or, at least, such of them as fell in her way.

With this initial difference between the girls, it was no wonder that the apparent advantages were all on the side of the daughter of Martin Foy, or that, when she undertook the education of her junior, the very simplicity and directness of Frances made her like wax in the hands of this self-constituted guardian and tutoress.

"What would you have me do?" said Frances, meekly, to Yvette Foy, "if I am not to inform my father that there may be a traitor in the camp?"

"We do not yet know all," said Yvette, in a low tone; "who are we, you and I? Two girls who have no experience of treaties and embassies, or of the hither and thither of politics. What have we seen? Only a suit of foreign regimentals, which if we charge the man with the possession of, he will doubtless say that he obtained in order to further his progress hither!"

The heart of her listener lightened perceptibly at the admission.

"But I understood you to say that you wished to save him from the fury of the Camisards!" said Flower-o'-the-Corn, a little mystified by her companion's rapid mental gymnastics; "*now* you say that a word of his own might suffice to clear him. He may then be innocent after all!"

"Nay, little one," said Yvette, using the most difficult of all arguments for the inexperienced to parry, "I have lived all my life in the midst of these things. You are a new-comer and very young. One day you shall know all. In the meantime, what you have to do is simply to steer clear of this young man with the too superabundant changes of raiment.

For the sake of your father's life, if not your own, do not be so unwise as to have any dealings with him."

"That is at least a prescription easy to follow," laughed Frances frankly and readily, "for indeed and indeed I do not care if I never saw him again."

At this Yvette kissed her friend, murmuring vague girlish tendernesses. Then she gently disengaged herself and walked to the window. Far down, at the entrance of a certain dark entry, stood a cloaked figure, the same she had seen in the church as she passed out during sermon time.

Yvette Foy smiled bitterly to herself.

"Ah, you there still, my good waggoner!" she muttered; "well, at some trouble and expense to myself I have succeeded in putting a somewhat considerable spoke in *your* wheel, Master Pierre Dubois of Roche-à-Bayard and Hoo!"

* * * * *

Pretty it was after this to listen to the give-and-take of confidence between these two—especially the give. For while Yvette said little, this our dove of a Frances, rejoicing to have one of her own age and sex to confide in, told out all that was within her heart with the sweetest and most delicate blushings in the world.

And it was a tale to strike her listener with envy. For though it dealt only with the innocentest and slightest girlish admirations, likings, preferences, what opportunities did the experienced Yvette not discern! What glimpses of a world of men in rapid and brilliant action, what glancings of golden epaulettes, glittering of lace, clinking of spurs—the hither and thither of the officers of a hundred regiments and half-a-dozen services! Contempt, not unmixed

with a certain wonder, took possession of the heart of Yvette Foy.

And this girl had walked through it all like one in a dream! A handsome young aide-de-camp of a commander-in-chief had confronted her among the Brabant wheat—apart—with admiration radiant in his eyes, and she (Flower-o'-the-Corn) had ridden off with a simple laughing word upon a borrowed horse. Right enough if she had meant to engage him further upon the morrow, but as it was—did any one ever hear of such stupidity, of simplicity that reached and overpassed the verges of folly?

Yvette Foy had to bite her nether lip to keep in the words of contempt. The tears almost started in her eyes to think of such opportunities wasted.

And meanwhile, Flower-o'-the-Corn prattled on, regardless of all.

"Yes," she said, "it stays in my mind that he admired me! I do not know why—but he did. Men do these things. No, I did not tell my father. Why should I intrude on his thinkings, which are, indeed, of things quite other than young men's follies. But somehow—somehow, though others have looked like that at me, there was something about him, perhaps his puzzled air as I rode away (I could laugh at it then) that, that—well, it made me think of him afterwards. I own it. Of course I shall never see him again. Yes, I know his name. He was well known about the camp of Namur, being secretary to my Lord Marlborough."

"Well, his name—what was it?" demanded Yvette, who in a love affair liked to get to the root of the matter quickly.

"His name was—that is, he was called, so they told me (for indeed I never spoke to him again)—

Captain Maurice Raith, of his Excellency the Commander-in-Chief's staff."

"He was handsome?"

"Of a handsomeness—yes," said Flower-o'-the-Corn, curling her lip with an elaboration of considering the question in all its bearings.

"A-h-h!" said Yvette very softly to herself, "he was handsome, was he—of his Excellency's staff? His name, Captain Maurice Raith. Ah, Captain—my pretty Captain. If I do not hold you now in the hollow of my hand—crack thy whip, good Master Waggoner! For, if so it prove, the thing that I desire is mine own already, or I shall know the reason why."

* * * * *

The defences of the village were approaching a state of completion. La Cavalerie was now the safest of all the strengths of the Camisards.

But victual and forage were at a perilously low ebb in case of a sudden attack. A foray became necessary. The point of attack and the leader must be decided upon.

As to the latter there could be little question. The Camisards would follow Jean Cavalier and no other man, so long as he remained among them. Had he not been almost uniformly successful? Was his name not a bugbear and a terror from Nant on the Dourbie to the bridge of Beaucaire? Roland, Catinat, Castinet—these were good men and true prophets, but no one of them approached Jean Cavalier in the power over men which makes command easy and natural. Furthermore, in the opinion of the Camisards, the Lord was with him. He prophesied but seldom, but when he did, the thing happened. Not once, nor yet twice was it so, but always. Which repute

naturally made him careful of his words, and a judicious silence passed equally for wisdom.

As for Pierre the Waggoner, he watched every movement of Flower-o'-the-Corn. He saw her convoy her father out in the morning, and, wrapping his cloak about him, was at the door of the little temple before her. But when they came past Frances was leaning upon Patrick Wellwood's arm, and looking up in his face, as he told her of the message which had been given him for those "poor, ill-learned, ill-advised, but earnest-seeking folk."

So she did not notice the young man in the shadow with the cloak about his mouth and the eyes that never left her face. She was thinking of other things. But neither his presence nor the direction of his eyes escaped the Demoiselle Yvette Foy, who made her entrance a little later.

When Frances came out again, it was with grinding of teeth that Pierre the Waggoner watched her leave her father's arm to encounter Yvette, and noted the increasing friendliness of the two girls. (Which, when one thinks of it, was, after all, the most natural thing in the world.)

Angry and baffled, Maurice continued to pace the narrow malodorous streets till he was footsore. Also he had strained his neck with craning it upwards to look into the windows of the Bon Chrétien.

Dark-browed Camisards, passing this way and that upon their occasions, glanced sidelong at him and remarked to each other in undertones that the emissary of the allies was overmuch given to spying through women's grilles, and that all honest men with uncertainties of the feminine order in their houses had best keep their eyes open. At which fathers of families nodded gravely and parted.

All this and more our Maurice suffered for naught—nay, had he known it, for less than nothing.

For from a topmost tower window of the Templar's House did not a pretty spiteful face regard him as he stood grinding the innocent paving-stones beneath his heels, and chewing the bitter cud of his disappointment.

"Ah," murmured the voice, with a low soft trill of scorn in it, "Flower-o'-the-Corn—did you call her? A pretty maid, a pretty name—by my faith, both fulsome pretty. But such flowers are not for you, my waggoner gentleman! Thistles, plain thistles, shall be your diet. Plain, green, purple-topped thistles with ragged leaves, cropped on an empty belly by the roadside, your long ears flip-flapping in the wind that frets every ass on the common, and every Tom-fool on the earth they call God's! Such, if Yvette Foy can arrange it, shall be your portion!"

CHAPTER XIV.

The Maison Rouge.

Frances Wellwood was hurrying home. It was already late in the autumnal afternoon. Her father would be waiting for the dish of tea which only she could brew for him—or, more likely, having waited in vain, he would be gone out to complete "his surfeit of good works," as (somewhat irreverently) she called his rounds of exhortations and visitations among the poor of La Cavalerie.

Suddenly Pierre the Waggoner stood before her. He appeared cloaked and hatted from the dark of the entry. With a certain forgetfulness of his assumed position he held out his hand to Flower-o'-the-Corn, frankly and freely as one of her own nation might have done.

"I have again to thank you for saving my life," he said. "I did not venture to trouble you yesterday with a formal visit, because I saw you had other matters to occupy you. But now I do. The preservation of my life may not seem much to be thankful for. It is of small value to any one but myself, but such as it is, I am no way likely to have another, and so am grateful to you for saving the one I have. I know —there is always something stupid in the uttering of such things—but, briefly, if there is ever anything in

your life in which a man can help you, think of Pierre the Waggoner ! "

" I thank you," said Flower-o'-the-Corn, coldly ; " but, in case of need, to which camp shall I send my messenger ? "

She was thinking of the suit of French clothes wrapped up by his servant so carefully in their coverings of rough matting. Yet it was for a reason at which she could not even guess that the young man was overwhelmed with confusion.

" To which camp ? Your messenger ? " he queried, faltering and changing colour as he spoke.

" Yes," she continued, smiling upon him with intention. " Did I not understand you to offer me such help as a man who means what he says, may honestly give a woman who needs it ? "

" Indeed, I said so, and I meant it ! " Maurice Raith reiterated, thrusting his hand out with a quick spontaneous action.

But Flower-o'-the-Corn withheld hers as if she had not seen.

" It is gracious of you," she said, stiffly, and with a chill feeling about her face, " but that which I did for you, I would have done for your carter-lad. And, indeed, I see not what you can ever do for me, unless " —(a spice of malice, perhaps transmitted from Yvette Foy, shot athwart her speech)—" unless, perchance, I should happen to have some goods to transport betwixt the towns of Roche-à-Bayard and Hoo ! "

Maurice stood cold-stricken, faint, not knowing what to make of the girl's words. Was it information or a guess ? Clearly, at least, she did not believe that he was a plain waggoner of Brabant.

" Madame," he replied—for he had sufficient professional readiness not to be taken wholly at a

disadvantage—"if it should ever be my good fortune to return to my native land, be assured that I shall be honoured to perform your behests, not only between Roche-à-Bayard and Hoo, but also between Hoo and Roche-à-Bayard—and to the world's end!"

He lifted his hat loftily, with a carriage and air that of a certainty were never those of Pierre Dubois. He would have departed straightway, but something in the girl's manner held him back.

"Stay," she said, and hesitated for a word; "I do not wish to part from you believing that a man like you is a traitor and a scoundrel. Are you or are you not the man you seem?"

The colour went wholly out of the young man's face. His lips grew ashen pale. He tried to find words to answer her, but they withdrew from him. The girl was right. He was not the thing he seemed. Yet he had no right to admit her to his General's confidence (which was now also Jean Cavalier's confidence) —or, at least, not yet.

Flower-o-the-Corn waited while one might have counted a score for Maurice to speak. Then she heaved the least little sigh.

"It is enough," she said; "except for your own silence, I would not have believed it. Now I know! Let me pass!"

And without a smile or the least glance of farewell, Frances Wellwood passed up the worn stone stairs with some of the grim determination of her covenanting father evident on her face. Yet all the while her heart was calling on her to return and say something to take the edge off her sharp speech. But her lips firmed one upon the other as she muttered, "A spy—a French spy! One who would deliver up my father to death!"

She meditated a long time, the thread of a remembrance running keen and vivid through her thoughts.

Where had she seen that uniform before? Like a bar of sunlight falling across the dark sea came the answer. On the waste sand dunes, wide, far-blowing, hollow-hearted between Campthout and Lilloo, where for three days the French army had been drawn out as in review order, complete to the last shoe-buckle, while hour after hour within the tent of Marlborough, the great commander strove in vain to bring the beaten Dutch and the halting Badeners to the point of an attack.

The Maison Rouge! That was what she had seen—the uniform of the inn stable was that of an officer of the French horse grenadiers, the famous "Red House" of the King.

At the same moment there came a sudden resolution into the breast of Maurice Raith. He had been enough tossed hither and thither, enough flouted and held at naught by this girl and that. He was sick of it all. The memory bit like the gnawing gangrene of an old wound, restlessly, sleeplessly at his heart.

He would not longer submit. He would follow the girl and clear himself in her eyes. He turned at the word and went up the stairs of the tower chamber three at a time.

But he had waited over long. The quick light footsteps fled higher and higher. A heavy door clanged, almost in his face. He bit his lip, and in his turn rapped loudly on the panels. Maurice Raith had little enough idea what he would ask for when the door opened. He was only acutely conscious that no longer would he, the sometime aide and confidential messenger of my Lord Marlborough, be made a clown and a laughing-stock of by any maiden living.

The door swung back on slow creaking hinges. Maurice found himself fronted by the tall majestic presence of the late chaplain of Ardmillan's regiment, who held out his hand and greeted him affectionately.

"Ah," he exclaimed, before the young man had time to speak, "you have come to consult me. It ran in my mind that you would. I judged from your not rare waitings upon the means of grace that you were anxious for your soul's safety. But still there is balm in Gilead. If you have brought to these poor folk of the Cevennes sharp swords and the armament of war, it may chance that we shall give you in return bread to eat—yea, bread that the world wotteth not of. Come thy ways in, lad. I would speak with you!"

And Maurice went in very gladly. For he thought within him that he would see Frances. But that wise maid, much alive to his intent, only listened without the door to his converse with her father—which, to do Patrick Wellwood justice, was of the gravest sort, and was listened to with increasing unwillingness on Maurice Raith's part.

Yet there shot a pang through her heart while she listened—not for the listening itself (for no woman in any intimate or personal case thinks the worse of herself for submitting to a necessity like that)—but because there was something kindly and boyish about the young man's voice, and because she knew that he desired so sorely to have converse with herself instead of with her father.

"Be not deceived, sir," said the old man, "not by the best deeds possible to man in this world, can he win one atom of favour in the next."

"Right happy should I be," said the young man, soberly smiling in his host's face, "if my good deeds

could win me one or two things which I desire in this under-world."

"Ah, yes," said the old pastor, shaking his white locks, not intolerantly, "the favour of some maiden, or such like, far in the North. Have I not also been young? And do not I know the hearts of the young?"

It seemed to Maurice Raith that here was his chance. Should he declare his feelings or no? The moment passed. There was a clang without, the patter of feet, a hush, and then a rustle.

"It is Cavalier," said the old man, with a keen pleasure on his face. "Jean Cavalier, who is to me as the son of mine old age!"

Then rage and mortification took hold upon Maurice Raith. Had he not heard and interpreted—that is, misinterpreted, as those too keen on circumstantial evidence usually do? It was not the patter of Flower-o'-the-Corn's little feet to the outer door to which he had listened. It was not the whispered colloquy of lovers—standing a moment behind it—intent upon each other, after the latch had been closed with care, which made the little waiting hush.

That listeners hear no good of themselves is generally a true and proven saying; and it applies also to listeners who strive to interpret too personally the simple things of life which environ us. When once we set to watching each other suspiciously, each act, however simple and ordinary, becomes fraught with deadliest significance. A penny given to a passing beggar assumes the air of a bribe. A twisted spill of paper half-burned, with a tailor's invitation to settle his half-yearly account, becomes suggestive of debts that can only be arranged by means of the bankruptcy court, or the sign-manual of a lady asking for the

usual charity to her seven helpless orphans is fraught with suggestion too criminal for mere words.

What Maurice Raith actually heard in the little tower over the western gate in the village of La Cavalerie was the hurried rush of a certain young woman, not altogether superior to the weaknesses of her sex, to the door of the turret chamber which held her bedroom, her pause for breath in the safe darkness of the stairway, and then the further waiting, finger on lip, for the entrance of the visitor.

A day or two before Jean Cavalier might also have had his illusions. But now his mind was busy with other things. He entered briskly, according to his custom, humming a cheerful psalm. The old man took his hand and led him within, where, on the great oak settle, he took his seat with the aplomb and assurance of a favoured guest of the house.

Maurice Raith could scarcely contain himself for anger. He it was who had seen her first. She was of his nation, of his religion, of his kin almost. Were not all Scots in the armies of the Low Countries as brothers and sisters ?

But this last was an argument which for the time being he could not advance. What had Pierre the Waggoner to do with Ardmillan's regiment or with the Scots Dutch who had stood by William at Steinkirk ?

" This is the young man sent to us by our brethren in the North," said the old man ; " he who brought us the weapons of war and the tidings of good cheer. Yet I would not that he should go from among us empty of hand. For iron I would give him gold—yea, even the gold of Ophir, that his soul may be filled with tidings of great joy."

And with his continual bright smile Jean Cavalier held out his hand. There was something invincibly

winning about the young man—perhaps even more for men than women. Though, indeed, thinking himself secure from the influence of women he was really weakest on that side. So he sat there securely counting even Flower-o'-the-Corn but a little maid by the wayside, to be smiled upon as he should pass by.

But Flower-o'-the-Corn herself thought otherwise; for as soon as the young soldier was securely within she entered easily, as if by the merest accident.

"Ah, you have come to see me!" she cried, with a little clap of her hands together, and without the least thought of Maurice, or what his feelings on the subject might be. The young man ground his teeth, and muttered bitterly of the inconstancy of women—concerning which, on the present occasion, he had not the slightest right to make any remark.

But Maurice Raith had suddenly grown so fiercely jealous, that had an angel from heaven come down to reassure him, he would have turned upon the intruder with the remark that he for one knew better, and was not to be hoodwinked.

"Ah, Dubois," said the young man, carelessly, "you here, are you? For my part I came in only to pass the time till you were due to arrive at my rooms on the other side of the tower-gateway."

"Aye?" said Maurice, fiercely, "so much was in my own thought also!"

Cavalier glanced momentarily across at the Scot. But, though conscious that he was in some degree ruffled, the young Camisard never for a moment supposed any connection between his agitation and himself, calmly continuing his talk with the old pastor, while Flower-o'-the-Corn ascended again to her own chamber.

"Presently, then, presently," he said, nodding

and smiling to Maurice with such unconscious graciousness of charm that Maurice, if he had not heard the light flying footsteps and diagnosed (how wrongfully we know !) the hushful pause, could have found it in his heart to forgive him. As it was, he only sat sulky, fingering his hat and wishing himself well out of it.

But there was no undue haste about Jean Cavalier. Small wonder, thought the suspicious Maurice. "In a little while he will make his excuse to go, and there, in the dim-lit passage, at the stair-head, in the obscure of the landing, *she* will meet him—I know the ways of such." (He did not say how he knew, nor yet why his knowledge gave him the right of criticism upon others.) Nevertheless, Maurice, listening in the intervals of talk to the ripples of sound, half-silent and half audible, the shiverings which come and go through every empty house, heard in imagination Frances Wellwood open the door of her chamber, descend on tiptoe, and stand awaiting in the quivering dusk—for whom ? For this rival of course, whom the hosteller's wench had called the baker's boy of Geneva.

So he thought, and so he would have taken his oath. Yet all the while (so deceptive is the habit of suspicion) Frances was in her chamber, the stiff creaking door unopened, looking out of the small-paned window at the clear sparkling stars. She had not moved, and all the to-and-fro, the rustle and bustle, the subtlety and stealth, existed wholly in the imagination of Maurice Raith. Which shows, among other things, that the young man was thinking more about our Flower-o'-the-Corn than was exactly good for him.

He awoke to find himself being addressed by the

pastor. The chaplain of Ardmillan's regiment had a bottle of wine in his hand, and his tone was that of apology.

"Water, as I remember," said he, "was made some time before wine, yet I know not how long. And if it be the pleasure or necessity of you two young men that you should go forth into the night, let it not be said that you went without such hospitality as may be shown you by Patrick Wellwood. Thrice I have called my daughter, but I fear that sleep hath fallen upon her young eyelids, inasmuch as she hath not answered. So I must e'en be mine own drawer and setter out of drink and victual!"

And with that the minister betook himself with grave and suitable dignity to the corner-cupboard, whence he was bringing out the silver trays and glasses, wiping them with a clean white napkin and setting everything in order, when, aroused by the unwonted clinking, and perhaps with an ear attuned to what was going on underneath, Flower-o'-the-Corn for the second time came swiftly clattering down the stairs, with the sharp clacking noise which her heels always made upon the stone steps, as is indeed customary with maids of quick nervous tempers when they are in haste. She burst in upon them without warning, all three of them at gaze open-mouthed upon her, her father with the uncorked bottle in his hand.

"Father!" she cried, "oh, how wicked you can be! Did not I tell you that you were never, never to touch these glasses? You know that the last time you broke four, besides those which rolled upon the floor!"

And at the rebuke her father hung his head shamefacedly.

"'Tis true, 'tis but too true, Frances," he said. "I own it. It was my fault. But indeed, I thought within me that you were gone to bed. For I called thrice and you answered not!"

"I was—" she began, but did not continue. For it had not come to this of it yet with Frances Wellwood, that in anything she could speak the thing which was not, to her father.

Then while she set before the youths the limited and austere hospitality of the Tower on the Wall, Patrick Wellwood discoursed at large upon the virtues of early rising and simplicity.

"Young men," he said, "I beseech you, mortify your members while ye are upon the earth. Be ever birds of the morning! Rise and see the sun colour the sky, ere yet his bed-clothes are well off. Early rising is as good for the grace of God, as it hath been held to be for the cultivation of the Muses. The slothful slug-a-bed is the one sinner for whom even God hath no compassion. So, young men, in a little the rose of the morning will be fairer to you than the sleep-bloom mantling upon your sweetheart's cheek, and the freshness of the air than the wine that gives his right colour in the cup. Gentlemen, I offer you a little simple country refreshment. It will neither make nor mar you at this time of night. For the product of this land in the matter of vintages is such as makes for wholesome abstinence. I might give as much to my daughter's canary bird with the expectation of finding him upon his perch in the morning. But, since you are in haste, drink your draught and be gone, like men who have only so many posts to travel along life's way, and but small time to dismount at each."

Flower-o'-the-Corn smiled and filled the glasses to

the brim. Then she presented one to Maurice first, as to the greater stranger in the house, and afterwards a second to Jean Cavalier.

"Do not heed my father," she said, "his words are more inhospitable than his heart. But he cares not for anything save that he may draw a lesson from it, I cannot so much as blow my nose in winter weather but that he deduces from that the shortness of time, and that I had better have been preparing for eternity."

"Frances, Frances," said her father, reproachfully, "pray have a care. Remember that for every idle word that man shall speak, he shall give an account."

"Dear old wingless cherub," cried Frances, clasping him about the neck, "it says 'man,' doesn't it? Well, I am only a girl. The Recording Angel, if he knows his work, will never mend his pen for aught that such a featherhead as I may say!"

The old minister shook his head in reproof, but, nevertheless, gazed adoringly at his daughter. If the name of the Recording Angel had been either Patrick Wellwood or Maurice Raith, there is no doubt that many of our Flower-o'-the-Corn's misdemeanours would have been disgracefully slurred over.

"But as to noses," continued the small rebel, "I hold the Catholic doctrine—that the means of grace, to be efficacious, must be frequently applied!"

"Frances," said the old man, somewhat more sternly, "have I not told you aforetime that it is ill-done of you to let your tongue thus run away with you? And what will these young folk think of you and your upbringing? I bid you think shame of your light words!"

Yet it was evident enough what one at least of these young folk thought. For, as for Maurice Raith, he hardly took his eyes off the saucy face of

Flower-o'-the-Corn, while even the more self-contained Prophet Jean Cavalier sipped his glass and looked over it at the girl with a marvelling air.

Yet even as he looked he silently rebuked himself, not knowing how much more deadly was the snare which should one day take him.

"The Lust of the Eye! The Lust of the Eye!" he murmured. And then in a louder tone, "Well, Master Pierre Dubois, you and I have infinite business together, and it is high time that we began it, if we mean to finish in time to see the morning sun shine over the Causse Noir yonder—which to do, as our old pastor here tells us, is the straight way of salvation."

"Nay, that said I not," cried Mr. Patrick Wellwood, shaking his head and smiling well enough pleased; "you are as bad as Frances, twisting the word of my mouth. I said not that to rise early is the way of salvation, but only that, other things being equal, early rising may be made a means of grace—or so, at least, I have found it!"

"Father," said his daughter, looking up at him with mock meekness, "it is, as I judge, your only grievous sin, though hitherto I have not dared to tell you of it. It keeps you so puffed up with self-righteousness all day, that you are perfectly unapproachable unless one is armed to the teeth! You have no idea," she added, turning to the young men, "what I have to reckon with when he takes a turn of getting up before the sun. If I am five minutes after him, I am even as a stranger and a castaway."

"Listen to her!" said Patrick, chuckling to himself.

"Aye, listen!" cried his daughter, continuing her narration; "listen and perpend. If it be a clear morning he rises (as he avers) 'to walk under the

unblemished eye of the day.' I say that is well. I will do likewise. I love to be astir betimes on clear sunny morns—at least then the exercise savours less of a penance. But when it is black and threatens storm he will threep down my throat that it is even sweeter and pleasanter so—for then 'it is fronting the cloudy brows of Providence,' which is a most estimable and wholesome exercise. Moreover, he will not be content to do these things himself, but must, for my soul's good, have me up out of my warm bed by half-past three of the clock, with nothing to do till eight but to listen to the creaking of his quill as it moves across the foolscap, registering the mighty thoughts which are aroused within him by getting up at unholy hours of the morning!"

"It seemeth to me wonderful and miraculous," said Patrick Wellwood, weightily, "that I should have begot and reared a girl like this, who will thus persist in belying and misrepresenting the course of my actions to herward. But there is in my country a good proverb, though, I believe, without Scriptural warrant of the exact sort, 'Whoso speaketh against father or mother, the corbies shall pyke out his eyes!'"

"Well, father," said the girl, "I am an arrant Socinian where my eyes are concerned. I deny everything. I must see that in the original Hebrew before I can accept it. And, moreover, it is true enough about your getting up in the morning. You know, as well as I do, that it makes you shamefully upsetting all the day. There is, indeed, no living with him, gentlemen, except as the snail may with the gardener—by keeping well out of his way!"

CHAPTER XV.

The Hour Before the Dawn.

Seeing that no more was to be gained by remaining in the western gatehouse of the town of La Cavalerie, and that, as the young Camisard leader had said, the time had come for their departure, Maurice rose sulkily, and with the briefest salutation to the pastor and his daughter made his way directly downstairs, resolved that if there was to be any hole-and-cornering in the lee of half-open doors, he would not be the man to spoil sport.

But all unconsciously Cavalier countered him, and with a parting salutation as brief, but far more gracious, intimated that since he had business with this gentleman which would in no wise stand over, it would be convenient for them to depart together.

To this neither of their entertainers offered any objections, Flower-o'-the-Corn because she wished to get back to her embroidery and her quiet thoughts in the corner by the lamp, her father because on cold nights, when the wind swept the streets bare as a bone, and the first white snowflakes swirled in the blackness of the blind alleys, it was the chiefest of his pleasures to sit in the chimney-corner with "Lex Rex," "Naphtali," or (most precious book) Knox's "History of the Kirk of Scotland," in its earliest and only genuine edition.

Then the good old man, hid away from the outer chill, forgot the danger of his journeyings, the small rewards and perilous 'scapes of his vocation. A sense, almost gladsome, of comfort awoke in him, of clear-burning logs and the swept hearth. His great brown eyes dilated with a soft happiness almost like that of a girl listening to a favoured sweetheart —or, more exactly, he touched the volume on his knee as a young mother might caress her first-born babe.

To each of the young men Flower-o'-the-Corn tendered her hand with the same swift upward glance, untroubled and tender as the dawning of a June day. Perhaps (and if there had been any chronometer beating fractions of seconds in the company) it might have been observed that she withdrew her hand a trifle the more quickly from that of Maurice Raith. From which a man would have deduced one thing and a woman another.

The woman, of course, would have been in the right. For what a girl will do " afore folk " and what when " left to the freedom of her own will " are, catechistically and actually, very different things indeed.

The two young men sallied out into the night—the keen silent magnitude of the overreaching heavens receiving them, and the sharp effectual chill of the high Causses in the bite of the air. It smelt of snow—the snow which comes so early up there. For in the valley of the Dourbie the grapes have not yet done hanging black upon the trellises when the good wives of La Cavalerie are busily sweeping the white wreaths from their doors.

" You have the additional papers with you ? " said Cavalier, carelessly, as they mounted the staircase of the opposite or easternmost tower.

"I have!" said Maurice, briefly, and passed them over intact, still bearing the seals which had been impressed upon them by my Lord Marlborough himself.

The young leader of the Camisards lit a lamp, set it on the mantelshelf, and, leaning his arm carelessly against the stonework, broke the seal and set himself to peruse the documents within. As he did so the fashion of his countenance altered. He frowned more and more darkly upon the written page.

He looked at the date at the head of the letter, and then at a printed "Reckoning of Days," done in Toulouse, which was pinned to his desk.

"You have been long upon the way, sir," he said, somewhat brusquely, to Maurice Raith.

The young Scot resented both the words and the tone.

"I have come as quickly as my orders and the safety of the service admitted," he answered, haughtily. "For that and the rest I am answerable to my superior officer!"

"I beg your pardon," answered Jean Cavalier, the fresh boyishness clean gone out of his face, "but the dates! Do you know that we of the Cevennes are to make arrangements to meet a squadron of British ships, cruising upon the Mediterranean coast, and from them receive further stores of provisions and armament of war?"

"And what of that?" said Maurice Raith, scarcely yet appeased.

"Well," answered the young Camisard, gravely, "we have but three days left to do it in, that is all!"

He threw the paper upon the table, and, leaning his head upon his hand, stood considering. Maurice lanced involuntarily at the writing, which was, of course, perfectly familiar to him. It was even as the

young man had said. So many days the allied fleet would cruise off the coast east of Cette. If no communication was effected during this period, it would be understood by those in command that the landing was impossible, and the squadron would return whence it came.

There remained just the three days and no more.

"I knew nothing of this," Maurice said, remorseful that he had not delivered all his papers upon the previous night; "you will remember that I am a stranger among you, and knew not definitely to whom I ought to deliver my papers. Further than that I have nothing to reproach myself with. I came with all imaginable haste through an entirely hostile country——"

The young Camisard waved his hand.

"I know, I know," he said, "the fault does not lie with you, but in the difficulty of the country through which you have had to come—from the North to the South of France with King's men a-swarm at every league. 'Tis no jesting matter."

But through the kindly consideration of his words Maurice noted the deep cogitation of his bearing. He knew the signs, and could not help being reminded by this peasant boy of the first General of his age when he had an important problem to study, or an irrevocable decision to take. Both Marlborough and Jean Cavalier had the same hurried walk to and fro—the same knitted brows, the same deep vertical spade-cut between the brows, which is the caste-mark of men of thought and action all the world over.

In five minutes Jean Cavalier had made his plans, cast the lots, and there remained nothing save to carry out his decisions.

"You will give me your note of hand," he said,

addressing Maurice Raith, "stating the day and hour at which these instructions were delivered to me. You will remain here with a sufficient garrison in charge of the town. They will accept you as my lieutenant upon my bare word. I will take the Genevan pastor with me to interpret, and with two hundred mounted men strike southward to the Gardiole above Frontignan, whence with a glass one may read the sea for twenty miles all about, clear as it were a printed book."

"And when do you start?" said Maurice, wild hopes working like yeast within him.

"Now," said Cavalier, his lips compressed to a mere line, and his eyes grey and far away, "now—get your weapons and be ready to take over the command of La Cavalerie in half an hour. I leave Catinat with you. He is brave and stupid, but will obey you to the last breath of his body. But you must not mind his talk, or you will be deafened."

The next moment there was the hurried fall of footsteps upon the stair. Jean Cavalier was gone. Three days to reach the point designated by Marlborough were quite enough had the road been clear. But at that moment, who knew?

The two hundred Camisards might run into an entire division of royal troops. Yet for the time being this did not trouble either Cavalier or that young aide-de-camp of Marlborough's, who was learning to be proud of being named lieutenant by the baker's boy of Geneva. He went across the sleeping village to the northern gate, where the watch, kept awake and alert by the zeal of Cavalier, swung a lantern in his face and demanded his name and business.

Then a trumpet blew—three or four stirring notes repeated thrice over. No more. And instantly windows

were thrown open everywhere. Men came tumbling out upon the street. There was a glitter of arms, the padding of many feet, from opened ground-floor doors a stamping of the iron-shod hooves of horses.

"A raid!" said some. "The enemy upon us!" cried others.

"'Tis only to prove us—he is always at his tricks, this baker's boy," growled a third, of the strictest sect of the Pharisees.

But the trumpet rang out again, full and round and clear.

"Mounted men and in haste!—The enemy must be hot upon us!" was now the only word. And instantly there arose the sound of a mighty trampling in all the stables of the town, and especially in those of Martin Foy, whither the newly-appointed commandant of La Cavalerie had gone to obtain the weapons which he had left in the care of Billy Marshall and his spouse.

For many reasons it had been in the mind of Maurice to resume his proper uniform of British officer. He told himself that this would be the proper course, as marking the right he had to give orders, and the support which was being extended to the rebel mountaineers by the allied powers. Really, however, his reasons were quite different and much simpler. On the other hand, it occurred to him, first, that he had no orders from my Lord Marlborough for any such display; secondly, that the fact of a British officer in uniform being in the camp of the Camisards would spread like wildfire through all France, and make the enemies of the poor hill-folk ten times more bitter than before; and, lastly, that he might need his disguise of waggoner to enable him to get out of the country when his mission should be finished.

So with a single, rather reluctant glance at the rough

packing of matting which contained his staff uniform (or at least had contained it when the waggons were ransacked), Maurice Raith received his sword and pistols from the reluctant Billy, who wished to go over them for the last time "wi' the least bit drap o' sweet oil an' a kennin' o' rag."

"And oh, Capt—I mean maister—be sure that ye keep them oot o' the wat. For thae wee pernicketty pistols o' yours are juist a heartbreak to clean when the damp gets in aboot the trikkers!"

As Maurice Raith went out, the one warm delicious thought which thrilled him like wine was that he would be left in the defenced village of La Cavalerie alone—or as good as alone—with Frances Wellwood. His rival, or the man whom he had looked upon as his rival, would be absent upon a mission which must, at least, occupy him a full week, her father also accompanying the expedition as interpreter.

It was indeed a thought to make the head swim. She would in some sort be under his protection. As the man left in command of the village and its defences, her father could not avoid asking him to keep an eye upon the lonely girl.

The world seemed suddenly filled with a sweet scent of dew-wet wall-flower—banks of it, acres of it, whole farm-breadths of it—such as Maurice had scented between Zaandam and Bloemendaal, once when he rode by night with despatches to the States General of Ho'land.

And now, though he was on the bleak edges of the High Cevennes, with winter coming on, and with no idea how he was to get clear off, the breaths of summer orchards and the home meadows of Castle Raith seemed to blow across him, as he buckled his sword and thrust pistol in belt before

going out with a new and responsible swagger into the night.

It was the alarm general which had first been sounded. Then came the summons for the Camisard horse in its full strength of two hundred, to hold itself ready to ride by night through the enemy's lines, by dint of greater daring and a local knowledge which touched the bounds of perfection.

The whole force of the Camisards, in so far as they had refuged upon the bleak south-looking Causses of the Larzac, was assembled in the little Grande Place of La Cavalerie. And there, under the moonless splendours of such a sky as only reveals itself to folk who live close up under the architrave of heaven, Jean Cavalier was uttering his prophecy to an assembled multitude, and the voice of him, generally so sweet, personal, and dulcet, had become as the rolling of Sinai thunders.

"Hear, ye folk of the clear vision, this has come to me suddenly—as the bolt from the cloud," he was saying. "I have in my hands the words of the great Duke himself, the commander of armies——"

"Put not your trust in princes!" croaked out Prophet Catinat, suddenly.

Cavalier turned on him instantly, and fixed him with eyes that glowed even in the darkness.

"Catinat," he cried, "I forbid you to speak again. Let it be enough for you to obey. I have heard say that your trust in princes was so great that you got yourself named after one of them—even after a Marshal of France. Is it so, or is it not?"

"It is so!" said Catinat, hanging his head. "But if I met him now I would have his life for his hatred of the folk of God!"

"Enough," retorted Cavalier, sternly, "I foresaw

your disobedience, and have arranged that you should remain here while we of the quest are absent. But for your soul's good you shall take all your orders from him whom you know as Pierre Dubois, the waggoner, who brought hither the message!"

"He is not of the Spirit!" said Catinat, with a sullen heaviness that augured ill for the peace of mind of Maurice Raith.

"Let him be as Saul, as David, or as Solomon," said Cavalier, suddenly spreading out his hands as in a benediction over the assembly, "he shall bear rule here in my absence. *The Spirit hath revealed it to me!* What say you, Folk of the Bond? Is my word law?"

And with a great voice the reply came back: "*As thou, Jean Cavalier, sayest, so say we!*"

"And Catinat, shall he obey as the Spirit hath said?" continued the young man, still with his arms outstretched.

"He shall obey or he shall die! We will see to it!" they cried as one man.

And at the sound of that hoarse crying, Catinat, old soldier as he was, turned pale.

"At the same time I delegate to this same Catinat, called the Prophet, all the offices and exercises of religion. In so much as I take the Genevan Pastor with me, in case we meet the English or others of our faith, but not of our tongue, Catinat shall stay here to read, to preach, and to interpret the Gospel. But all that concerns the defence of the town, the building and manning of the walls, the sallying forth to meet the enemy—all that pertains to the military and civil government of the town shall be, till my return, wholly and solely in the hands of the young stranger known as Pierre Dubois. Thus the Spirit hath directed and thus it shall be!"

As Maurice stood listening to the sound of his assumed name, a soft voice spoke over his shoulder. "A mightily convenient spirit for any man to be familiar with," murmured Yvette Foy, with the most silken satire. "I wonder the baker's boy does not make his devil over to you during his absence. It strikes me that you may need something of the kind."

"Catinat will attend to all that for me," said Maurice, smiling at her over his shoulder. A torch or two had been brought from this house and that, and now faintly illuminated the vast and silent crowd which was swayed by the mere sound of Cavalier's words.

"Catinat," murmured the voice again, scornfully, "Abdias Maurel may be a prophet, indeed, after his kind. But he is a man. He is playing his own game. *I* will help you for—for—well, for nothing!"

CHAPTER XVI.

Check !

Thus was the still virgin Camisard fortress of La Cavalerie left in charge of a certain Captain Maurice Raith, late aide-de-camp to his Excellency the Duke of Marlborough, presently known as Pierre Dubois, a waggoner, with a precarious and not-to-be-too-closely-inquired-into connection with the Flemish towns of Roche-à-Bayard and Hoo.

Theologically, the Prophet Catinat, an old soldier of the earlier Italian wars, drilled the inhabitants with a severe prayfulness, much as he was used to exercise his company with pike and musketoon. If they were to be benefitted spiritually, Catinat meant that they should work for it. The grim yet determinate earnestness, combined with a touch of sunstroke, characteristic of military piety (on the retired list), caused him to throw himself—as it were, broadcast upon the devoted town of La Cavalerie.

So long time he had and no longer. This he realised to the full. For with the return of Jean Cavalier, all authority to whomsoever delegated, would lapse. In the meantime he must make the best of it.

And he did. For in this matter the old soldier was quite pitiless. Why otherwise had he seen the bursting bombs, the sack of towns ?

There was, first of all, morning service which lasted

two hours from the shivering matin-chime of the six o'clock bell at the little Protestant Temple. Then came a prophetic review and forecasting (both equally tedious) at the hour of noon, and in the evening they had a rechauffée of both discourses, till the male inhabitants of the village came to Maurice to beg from him some imperative military duty—if it were only the digging of trenches or the transportation of earth.

And Maurice, his heart full of pitifulness, found work willingly for the poor men. There was a certain heap of stones which (it was bruited) saved as many as sixty God-fearing Camisards from an ill death. For as soon as they had transported these bodily to the spot at which Maurice ordered them to be placed, it was always open to him to bid his workmen restore the *status quo*.

Certainly Catinat was a heavy burden to any commandant of a defenced town. Yvette Foy had been a true prophet.

It was the day after the departure of the expedition. Maurice had taken over his full powers, but already Catinat was developing into a thorn in the flesh so unendurable, that the military chief could be under no manner of illusion as to why Jean Cavalier had left him at home.

No matter what drill or military exercise Maurice might order for day or night, Catinat was always on hand to propose that it should be prefaced by "a few words of exhortation," or to declare that "the Spirit moved him to deliver an address at that time and place."

Yet Maurice, having by order of Cavalier nothing to do with the religious duties of the embattled mountaineers, could interpose nothing. But he observed

with sympathy the shudder which ran through the ranks as the " Prophet of the Cevennes " settled himself to his work.

Still there were alleviations. Patrick Wellwood had taken his young countryman aside, and in words few and chosen, had committed his daughter to his care.

" Precious to me as the apple of mine eye, is this child," he had said ; " so let her be unto you ! Without fear I leave her in your charge, the one ewe lamb that hath laid in an old man's bosom. According as you fulfil my behest, so may the blessing of God Almighty rest upon you. Thus and not otherwise ! "

And as the lantern flared upward upon the pale, thin, wrestling face, the waving white hair and the wandering casual right eye of the preacher, Maurice promised to be a faithful friend and servitor.

It was not a difficult promise to perform in any case. The difficulty (as Maurice well knew) would be to persuade the girl to accept any favour or protection at his hands.

Before leaving, however, the old man partially lightened his mind.

" I have spoken to the damsel herself," he said, " and as I understand she is noneways averse to considering herself under your protection. Ever since our coming hither, this young David of a General Cavalier has proven himself as a brother unto her. I have small doubt that thou wilt do likewise ! "

Thus accredited, Maurice lost no time in presenting himself at the western gatehouse. At the stair-foot he came suddenly on an ancient charwoman, her head wrapped completely about in a pair of her husband's nether garments, the legs tied picturesquely beneath her chin.

Maurice was wondering why such women all the

world over, should have their heads wrapped up for toothache—why their petticoats should always be ample enough for half a dozen winevats to be concealed beneath—and why a smell of strong waters of Holland should encompass them as with a garment, when this particular specimen of the breed beckoned to him mysteriously.

A maudlin smile played across her bloated features, and she displayed a set of teeth which, like King William's line of battle after Steinkirk, was "mostly gaps."

"Too late, young man," she muttered, huskily; "the bird has flown. You must seek her in a different nest. Yestreen it had been another matter, but to-day——"

Here she broke off into a trampling measure:

"It's powder and reek and thunder,
When the cannon begin to shoot,
But its girls and gold and plunder
When the carlins pouch the loot."

"What has become of Mistress Wellwood, you drunken old heathen?" demanded Maurice, full of gusty angers.

The old woman looked at him cunningly.

"'Heathen,' said ye?" she muttered. "Aye, 'tis a distinction in this place, where they pray all day and plunder all night. By my faith, I'd rather be a clean, even-down heathen than——".

"*Where is the young lady!*"

"The young lady—the young lady," repeated the ancient wine-bibber, as if trying to recall her memory, "that were too difficult a question for me, unless—unless——"

She crooked her claw-fingers suggestively, till Maurice, with an impatient gesture, threw, rather than

placed, a gold coin within them. They closed automatically upon it. She tugged at the ungainly trouser-leg which was about her frowsy forehead with some vague idea, perhaps, of "making her manners."

"I thank you, sir," she said, biting the gold surreptitiously. "Come in, come in with you, and see that old Elise speaks only the truth."

She lurched forward as she spoke, upsetting on her way a can of dirty water and a dish-clout on the boards of the floor.

"I am to keep all clean during my little lady's absence. You have not another of these pretty yellow things about you?" she stuttered. "I have been sore tried with my breathing, and I find these labours a deal too hard for me! Eh, dear, if ever any one was born to be a lady, I was that woman!"

Maurice felt a sudden spasm of disgust, but curiosity drove him on.

"Which was *her* room?" he said, hastily; then as if ashamed, he added, "I understand she is gone away—you will tell me where? In the meantime, I would like to see her room—where she lived, I mean!"

For he remembered well that in the room in which Patrick Wellwood had received him, there had stood behind a screen the plain camp bed of the chaplain of Ardmillan's regiment.

The old woman, with a grumbling whine about knowing when she could trust to the generosity of a great man, led the way up a stair and threw open a door. There, sweet and white and clean as her own pure skin, was Flower-o'-the-Corn's chamber—the bed folded down and showing the linen, fine and choice, the walls of oak smoked black by the reek from the great open fireplace, with engravings of great men and oblongs of embroidery and tapestry work upon them,

disposed with a natural taste under this beam and over that cupboard door—so that the whole (to the eyes of Maurice Raith) was a wonder and a marvel, so different from his own bare quarters at the Auberge of the Bon Chrétien.

He almost seemed to hear Flower-o'-the-Corn's clear voice demanding of him what he did there? It was like violating a shrine of the Virgin.

"Go in, go in!" croaked the vile old woman, who had meantime repeated the dose of spirits from a small pocket bottle behind Maurice's back, while he stood entranced; "make sure that the little missy is not here—so pretty as she keeps everything! But I wager it is the bird you want! Ah, you soldiers, you are all alike. You would not give many sous for the poor nest. All the same, you will not forget poor old Elise for showing it to you."

Maurice Raith felt that it would be an indignity almost personal to enter the dwelling-place of so pure a spirit in his great clumping military boots. Instinctively he took off his hat at the open door, said an unwonted prayer, and so stole silently away, his head downcast, leaving the drunken old woman to follow or not as it pleased her.

She locked up the chamber, and grumblingly descended.

"Whither did you say Mistress Frances had gone?" he asked as carelessly as he could.

The old woman, a horror of chalk-pale cheeks and brick-red features, with that unspeakable headgear of her husband's breeches, swagging this way and that over her blowsy bosom, laid her finger cunningly by the side of her nose, with a cunning action which said, "Don't you wish you may get it!"

Maurice, ever willing to take the plainest road to the solution of any problem, extracted a second gold Louis from his pocket. He held it between his finger and thumb in full view of the blear-eyed crone.

"Has Mistress Frances at the last moment accompanied her father?" he asked.

Madame Elise shook her head so emphatically that the ruins of a tobacco pouch, the brass clasps worn to the quick, tumbled out of the pocket of her headdress and debouched its contents upon the floor.

"No," she said; "she stayed here by herself for two hours last night reading good books—her father's books. Then came Mistress Foy and took her away—saying that it was not becoming that a young girl so beautiful should be left alone in such a wide house! He, he! Doubtless she had an inkling of your coming, sir!"

Maurice turned on his heel as on a pivot and stamped his way out angrily. But the crone pursued after him, crying, "The gold, good gentleman! The golden Louis! Do not defraud a poor old woman! And, indeed, I would have kept her if I could, kind gentleman. Much more money would have come to poor old Elise if she had remained here!"

Over his shoulder Maurice angrily tossed the piece of gold, which the unclean hag caught ere it fell and stowed away in her pouch carefully. For did it not contain the means of procuring many small square-faced bottles—an export of the States General of Holland which Madame Elise counted more precious than whole parks of artillery.

Then with a peevish drunkard's curse she consigned her benefactor to the particular Hades known as the Paradise of Fools. She had no respect for young men who spent their money so foolishly. When

she was young—well, matters had gone quite otherwise.

But at that time, as it struck her on coming opposite a mirror, she had not suffered so continuously from swelled face, nor yet had she worn her husband's breeches as a morning coiffure—which, after all, might conceivably make a difference.

CHAPTER XVII.

Under which Queen, Bezonian?

So great and even overwhelming was the influence of Jean Cavalier upon the Camisards who had refuged themselves in the little town of La Cavalerie, upon the crown of the Causse of Larzac, that none ventured to counter Maurice in word or deed, save Catinat alone —and he rather by making it difficult to carry out his military dispositions owing to superabundant religious exercises than by any direct opposition.

It was at this juncture that the Marshal de Montrevel began to manifest renewed activity. He moved out of Millau, and as a first measure occupied all the valley of the Dourbie, with the exception of the fortified village of Saint Veran, a perfect eagle's nest upon an eminence so completely isolated, that only by means of a cable could communication be held between the Camisards there and those upon the nearest escarpment of the Causse of Larzac. This took place even over the heads of the King's outposts, who often used to fire upwards at the packages which were sent to and fro overhead upon the swinging cradles, on the chance that they might contain a stray Camisard or two, escaping from the hen-coop of the Causse Noir to the comparative freedom of the Larzac.

This move of the enemy was rather a relief than otherwise to the feelings of Maurice Raith. It gave

him something to think of besides the fact that Flower-o'-the-Corn was in the same house and inaccessible to him.

For whatever might have been the ideas or desires of Frances Wellwood on the subject of Pierre Dubois, Yvette saw to it that these were not carried out.

The whole *ménage* of the Bon Chrétien was a curious one. Martin Foy, who had been left behind by Cavalier (as not sufficiently young and active), was unwearied in his attempts to bring his reluctant family together. Many of his temporary guests had departed, and he was therefore at liberty to devote a much larger portion of his leisure to Maurice Raith's entertainment than that young man was at all grateful for. It is quite possible, however, that he may have received from his daughter a hint to that effect.

At all events, certain it is that though Maurice had no difficulty in coming to face-to-face speech with Yvette Foy, he could not advance one step in the direction of breaking down the iron reserve behind which Flower-o'-the-Corn had chosen to entrench herself.

Every day and, indeed, every hour he spent within the Bon Chrétien, Yvette Foy never left him to himself. Never was a lonely man so comforted and cossetted. And had Maurice Raith not longed with all his heart for the blue eyes of Frances Wellwood, he might very well have contented himself with the exceedingly obvious favour of the very fair demoiselle Mistress Yvette Foy.

She compassed him about with kindness, far above his thought or even his desire. Whoever at the Bon Chrétien might go hungry, Maurice Raith must be fed, and to the minute. When he came in from the walls and the trenches (for he was continuing and

extending the military works of Cavalier on more scientific, though, perhaps, not more adequate lines) he never entered the "auberge" or left behind him the sharp tang of the stable atmosphere, without finding at the top of the stairs a lovely face, a bewitching smile, and a hand pressed quickly to a softly kerchiefed bosom, as if the "long-looked-for-come-at-last" were a pleasure too great for a form so frail to endure.

Still more, in the minutest details of the camp work and the duty of the trenches Yvette proved herself not only an excellent listener, but a most clear-sighted critic.

Never was Maurice so late, but Yvette Foy was there, ready to remove his cloak from his shoulders, heavy as lead with rain or battened white with snow. An unwonted freedom of welcome, a gracious and gentle complaisance seemed to envelope him from the moment he left behind the chill and slush of the highway.

And the explanation of this was no other than the fact that Yvette Foy had taken for her model—who but Flower-o'-the-Corn.

She had said to herself, "Here is a man who is to be won. He can be won. For is he not a man? I will win him! But how? He is inclined (so inconceivable are the follies of men) to be fond of this whey-faced she-Puritan from overseas, who never had a desire beyond conserve of roseleaves plastered on new baked bread all her blameless life. Well, if that be what he admires, he shall have it! But with an unstaled charm, an untasted fervour, a new insistence. He shall learn a page—only a page of the book which has on its title-page the name of Yvette Foy."

So from that moment a new life began for Maurice Raith. He had never had a woman to think either

for or of him before. His snell-tempered, tender-hearted aunt in the great old house of Raith would doubtless have shed the last drop of her scant and thin blood for his sake. But equally she would have died before she let him know it.

Such welcomings, then, as Maurice Raith gat on his incoming into the house of the Bon Chrétien might well bind a man with the ties which are called those of home. He found by some wondrous magic all things ready to his hand. His requirements were comprehended and provided for (as it seemed) even before the thought had flashed across his brain.

And, withal, there was an atmosphere of womanly attention, the woven glamour of meetings and partings, the subtle difference which the mere presence of a fair woman makes in a house. All these the young aide to my Lord Marlborough now experienced for the first time.

Yet in all this, nor word nor glimpse of Frances Wellwood did he obtain. She never showed herself on the street. She dwelt wholly on the top floor of the Templars' House, where she and Yvette Foy shared one great room in such completeness and closeness of amity, as is only attained by college companions and young girls in their first burst of friendship and confidence.

Not but what Maurice made several attempts to break through the reserve of his young hostess with regard to her friend.

One night in particular he had come back to the Bon Chrétien weary and depressed. The six days of his command were already half over, and as far as he was concerned, Flower-o'-the-Corn had far better have been with her father in the westernmost tower over the Templars' Gate. He looked up at the lighted

window of the room which he knew to be Yvette Foy's, and wondered if there was within any thought of him—if an ear (the ear was shell-thin and pink-lined) inclined itself ever so little to catch the clatter of his heavy boots on the steps, the tinkle of his spurs (which being a man and a soldier he could not deny himself the satisfaction of wearing) and the clank of his sabre on the stone turns of the stair. He wondered. He sighed, and lo! there, above him on the landing, stood a vision which might have turned the head of a wiser and an older man than Captain Maurice Raith.

Maurice was not vain, but, like most men, he was vainer than he thought himself. Thus gradually Yvette Foy's gracious attentions won upon him. And this night, after a peculiarly wearing day, when Catinat (or Abdias Maurel, as his true name was) had been more than usually hateful, it is no wonder that the sight of the girl Yvette, in her finest and daintiest raiment (a gown which had been sent her from Paris by her friend Mademoiselle Eugenie la Gracieuse), bending eagerly as if to watch for his return over the iron balustrades of the stairway landing, sent a warm glow through his heart.

And, indeed, Yvette was a lovely vision, her black hair heaped on the top of her head, confined at the back with a small diamond and tortoise-shell comb, the flush of youth and health on her cheek, her lips red as the pomegranate blossom, the most joyous of all earthly hues seen against the sapphire of the sky. Her gown was of the palest blue, such as an ordinary girl would have thought possible only with a roseleaf complexion and a skin of milk. But in this as in all that pertained to personal attraction, Yvette Foy made no mistakes.

She knew that none can wear pale blue with such effect as a dark-eyed girl with an ivory skin and heaped masses of hair, with blood that comes and goes in dusky wine-red flushes upon her cheeks, responsive to the beating of her heart. A little white fringe of fleecy lace was about her neck—above, the heaped, careless, tumbled masses of dark hair, the subtle drawing power of willing eyes, the slender lissomness of her girlish figure. Small wonder if that night Maurice Raith owned to himself that there were but few maids in France equal in beauty to Yvette Foy, of the Bon Chrétien, in the Camisard village of La Cavalerie.

He stood a moment beneath her, struck, regardant, while she smiled—smiled with the half-petulant assurance of a girl who is certain of her charms, and the aplomb of a woman who can afford to give a man the full pleasure of the eye without compromising herself.

"Ah," he murmured in English, without thinking what he spoke, "but you are very lovely. I had not thought it."

"Pardon me," she said, in her own pretty French, "but I do not understand. I have not the English—no word of it! 'Tis my misfortune!"

Though indeed she had understood well enough the start, the stoppage on the stairway, the dumb gaze upward, Maurice's sudden anxiety about the state of his boots and wet coat, and even the uncertain tone of his speech. These were all in a universal language, exceedingly well understood of Mistress Yvette Foy, who had had much experience.

"You will get cold standing there in that dress," he said at last, as he came up to the landing, unable to take his eyes off such a radiant vision.

Yvette laughed with light amusement.

"I wonder," she said, "how long it will take you

to get the parade rasp out of your voice when you come into my parlour!"

"Did I order you—I did not mean it!" said Maurice, penitently enough.

"Indeed, it sounded much like it," she said, "but give me your cloak! I will order you in my turn."

"Indeed, I will not; on other nights when you are not arrayed as one of the angels of heaven—all in white and blue. But not to-night!"

She stamped her little foot sharply, with a mock intolerance.

"Who is in charge of this commanderie of the Bon Chrétien, you or I?" she cried.

"You—you—of a surety—you and no other!" he replied, with mock humility, and as if in haste not to displease her.

"Well then—your cloak!"

And she took the great heavy folds from off his shoulders with a masterful action. They were no light weight as she held them out dripping at arm's length.

"See," she said, "can any in your regiments do more for you than little Yvette Foy—aye, even the sour-browed gipsy downstairs himself?"

And, indeed, the light way in which she bent to the ground and lifted heavy weights—the easy indifference with which she could, upon occasion, and with the utmost nonchalance, do the work of a man, proved the exquisite perfection of the muscles which worked so smoothly, contracting and extending rhythmically under that satin skin.

Then, after a little pause, she spoke caressingly, yet simply, as his mother might have done (at least, so Maurice Raith thought, who could not remember his mother), "Go into this little room where there

is a fire. Change your wet boots there, and then, when you are ready, come into my parlour and tell me all about your troubles. I see you have been distressed to-day. Catinat, I suppose, as usual. But you shall tell me all afterwards ! "

She vanished, light as the flitting shadow of a bird when it crosses the road in the sunshine. Nevertheless, it remained long in Maurice's mind that ere she went she had tossed him a careless kiss from her finger-tips, such as a sister might have done. Maurice had no sister; but in this, as in other things, he felt that he had been badly treated by nature. Such a sister as Yvette Foy, so full of understanding, so capable, so sympathising in all things, never in the way and never out of it—pox on it, how happy a fellow might have been if only he had had for a sister Yvette Foy—and, of course, Flower-o'-the-Corn.

But he did not get time to specify the relationship, motherly or otherwise, in which he desired Flower-o'-the-Corn to serve his high masculine majesty, before a low quick knock returned to the door of the little room. It had evidently been occupied for other purposes than the doffing of wet masculine garments. For petticoats and feminine falderals hung about it, all in a faint indescribable perfume, an atmosphere of dainty white-and-pink confusion which went to Maurice Raith's head like wine !

Gingerly the young man opened the door. Yvette Foy stood before him smiling, a pair of slippers in her hand and dry stockings over her arm.

" They are my father's," she said, in an excusing tone; "you may find them rough. All the same, I knitted them myself, so I can promise you that they are warm, and, indeed, I have had them for an hour or more before the fire before bringing them down ! "

She nodded brightly once more and turned to go, while he remained dumbly gazing at her with the stockings and slippers in his hands.

Perhaps it was that which made the girl turn her head over her shoulder with a peculiarly witching smile as she stood on the second step of the stair.

"Am not I a good hostess—to those I—I—like?" she said.

And the last part of the sentence was spoken very low, and the expression of her eyes at the moment would have satisfied most men.

Then she seemed to take fright at what she had said and took to her heels.

Maurice Raith could hear her pretty Parisian slippers *clitter-clattering* up the stairs towards her bedroom at a great rate. Then came the slam of a door and—silence. All the while he stood in the blank doorway, the warm woollen stockings and the easy slippers in his hand, his heart trying in vain to beat out its admiration for two girls at once. His heart was not, so he told himself, in the least untrue to Flower-o'-the-Corn. How could he be? But he certainly wanted Yvette Foy very much—as a sister.

Indeed, at that moment, he would have given any one even to the half of his kingdom (no great matter!) to tell him which girl he was in love with. And the man who told him would have earned the premium.

No doubt (for the lad was sound) in his heart of hearts he loved but one girl only. And she Frances Wellwood, the daughter of one Patrick, of that name.

But, in spite of all tradition, proximity and propinquity deal far more hardly with men than with women, and an early and ineradicable affection has its place much oftener within the bosom of a woman than in the heart of a man.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The Dangerous Play of Brother and Sister.

Brother-and-sister is by a great deal the most dangerous game which young people, unconnected by ties of birth, can set themselves to play.

Yet by the fire in the little dressing-room Maurice Raith, *alias* Pierre the Waggoner, drew off his wet socks, and with sighs of a prodigious comfort endued himself with the consolation of warm woollen upon his feet, not hurrying himself greatly, in so much as he wished to think over certain things before he betook him to the warm parlour and sisterly *tête-à-tête* to which he had been invited.

That he did not love Yvette Foy and that he did love Flower-o'-the-Corn—so much was clear to him. But, all the same, there was a feeling in his heart both angry and indignant. What had he done that she should thus treat him as an outcast, hold him not only at a distance, but refuse to come near him, as though he carried the pestilence about with him ?

He would not stand it. No man of any pride would. (By this time he had one foot completely equipped, and the warm glow replacing the chill wetness accentuated the thoughtfulness of—the Other.)

Nine men out of ten are moved by physical considerations in their affections. Women never believe this, or, at least, but few of them. Sometimes the

odd woman who does believe it, comes across the tenth man whose love is wholly in his soul, and the results are worthy of the closest study. But so it was not in this case.

Maurice Raith was in every respect a perfectly normal young man, and the feeling of comfort stealing up from his wet foot, the pleasing tickling of the warm rough sock did very well in the place of affection (sisterly, of course).

Yet there was in him no thought of untruth. He loved—only his love was unkind. That was all. But he did not talk, as many foolish youths have done, of "two strings to his bow," or believe (which is a vain thing) that such bow-strings will neither entangle themselves nor go about his own neck with more than Turkish certainty. No, he was all in favour of pure "sisterly affection" and the commerce of souls, without knowing (poor lad!) that such things are vain between men and women, unless provided for by the family circle and the parish register.

The sisters whom men desire to adopt are invariably pretty, and their manners and customs are not those of the sisters of the home and the family. But Maurice was young, and did not know this. He cherished an insane desire to have Yvette Foy—his thoughtful hostess and charming friend, for a sister—a temporary sister—with, of course, privileges such as are granted to all good real brothers—who, however, but rarely and indifferently avail themselves of them.

Yvette Foy, on the contrary, had no such fraterno-sororial illusions. She understood making love, its beginning, middle, and end—as it were, its high, low, Jack and game! But as to anything milder—no, thank you! *She* would leave that for mealy-mouthed, whey-drinking, please-cover-up-my-ankles girls—like,

well—like Frances Wellwood, whom they called Flower-o'-the-Corn. *Flower-o'-the-Corn, forsooth!* Flower-o'-Miss Prinkety Primsey's-Garden-plot, more like!

Yvette looked at herself in the glass.

"No," she laughed with the low contralto warble grown a little scornful low down in her throat, "if there must be a Flower-o'-the-Corn it is I—the red Poppy is the only true flower o' the corn!"

And she looked in the mirror as she arranged her hair, just long enough to catch the scarlet dash of her red lips upon the ivory of her face. They were smiling scornfully, and she liked to see them so.

She looked across to where Frances Wellwood was busily reading books out of her father's library, in which (strange as it may appear) she found at that time her chiefest diversion.

She glanced up at her friend looping up and ranging cunningly the great dark masses of her hair.

"Why have you to go down again?" she asked, "surely you have had enough to fret you this day! And you will not let me do anything to help you. I could cry for very idleness!"

Yvette went over to Frances Wellwood quickly and kissed her.

"Dearest," she said, "I did not bring you hither for aught but to give you such rest and peace as you need. Rest thee then, sweetness! I am but a poor innkeeper's daughter, and it behoves that I attend upon my guests. Pardon me now that I leave you!"

And so snatching up the warm socks and slippers from the hearth, she went out. "For my father and his friends," she said, "the messenger waits for me!"

And so she vanished with a lovely and loving smile upon her face. And Frances Wellwood thought

within herself that never since the world began had there been given to any girl, a friend so dear and unselfish as this Yvette Foy of the village of La Cavalerie. And as she thought a tear stole slowly down from under her long drooped lashes—perhaps for the love she bore her friend—perhaps for the lack of something else which was not in her life, but for which, even in its own despite, her whole soul longed.

Then, peacefully and sweetly as ever did any maiden, Yvette went down. She had told no lie with the tongue.

She found Maurice Raith with the radiant face which unexpected kindness always produces upon the unspoilt and really simple-minded. And so, of a truth, Maurice was, in spite of his experience of courts and the advice of the First Courtier of the Century.

"*Why are you so kind to me?*" he said quickly, as he saw Yvette holding something very like emotion in check. The thought of his treatment by Frances Wellwood made the question more keenly edged than it need have been.

Impulsively, and like a young girl, Yvette held out both her hands for him to take.

"Because," she said, frankly, "I have no friend here who can understand me—and I need one so!"

"But the pastor's daughter, Mistress Wellwood?" suggested Maurice.

Instinctively Yvette knew that to say a word against Flower-o'-the-Corn would undo all that had been done.

She looked about wildly, and then, as if constrained to utterance, she murmured, "Must I confide in you?"

He looked at her standing there, straight-eyed, quiet, reliable, as one who could keep all secrets, either of her own or other people's.

"I must! I will!" she said, with a stifled intonation, as if necessity drove her.

"Well," she whispered in his ear, "this is a secret which must be kept—most of all from Frances Wellwood. *Her father is here in this place as a spy and a traitor!*"

Maurice gasped

"Impossible!" he began. "I have known him——" He stopped. He was but Pierre the Waggoner, and had no right to reveal the secrets of the late chaplain of Ardmillan's regiment.

"I believe it," she said; "I have discovered his past—all of it. I know whence he came, and that he is here without any authority from his superiors either of the Church or of the army! You know that as well as I, if I judge aright!"

She waited for her words to take effect, and then continued. The sentences, as if driven from her by the stress of circumstances, were punctuated by the great tears dropping down her cheeks.

"I cannot tell his daughter—I cannot—I cannot! She is so sweet and good. It would kill her. I dare not tell the Camisard chiefs, nor Jean Cavalier, nor my father. They would have his life on the instant. And—oftentimes (do not think hardly of me)—I am so driven that I know not what to do. I am only a girl, you see!"

She was sobbing undisguisedly now, the great throat-rending gasps almost like those of a man, shaking every part of her frame. Maurice stepped forward quickly, and caught her about the slender body. No man, least of all no brother, could have done less.

"Do not—do not," he stammered, eagerly; "you do the man wrong——"

"Oh, indeed, if I could believe it, how happy would I be!" sighed Yvette, catching him by the lapels of his waistcoat; "but can you believe it yourself. You came with a message and a commission. But had you any information as to this pastor?"

It was a bow shot at a venture, and it went straight in at the joint of Maurice's armour. He was silent, for the shot had told.

Yvette saw her advantage, and went on still sobbing undisguisedly, but not at all moving out of Maurice's arm—appearing wholly unconscious of it, rather.

"But what of that," she said, with a swift impatient motion of the hand, turning to her desk. "I have here first-hand evidence of the man's guilt. He is in correspondence with the Maréchal de Montrevel. Behold his signature!"

And on the back of an unopened envelope, sealed with a coat of arms, appeared the signature, "*Aug. de la Baume*," the family name and style of the Marquis and Maréchal of Montrevel.

Maurice turned the missive thoughtfully over and over in his hand. His brow darkened. Involuntarily a devil's advocate's explanation of many things rose up in his mind.

Marlborough, who had made him his messenger official, would never have crossed his track or rendered his position mere difficult by sending an unauthorised rival. At least, he would not have done so without his knowledge. No, with all his faults John Churchill would never so have dealt doubly with him.

The missive was clearly addressed to "Mons. le Pasteur Patrick Wellwood, dit de Génève." And in the corner was written in the same hand as the signature, "To be delivered only into the hand of the person addressed."

"What must I do? Oh, what must I do?" sobbed Yvette, her bosom swelling and the great globed tears chasing each other swiftly down her cheeks. "I am only a girl—a girl in the midst of men's affairs and all alone. And—you are the only one whom I dare to consult!"

"Your father!" suggested Maurice.

The girl made a little contemptuous movement, very characteristic.

"Yes," she said, "if I wanted to see the blood of Patrick Wellwood staining the road one hour after—*then* I would go to my father. Indeed, I might as well go to Catinat at once! But, instead, I have come to you!"

And she raised her great eyes to his—rich velvety-black, brimming with unshed tears. Than which eyes can look no more entrancingly.

"I have come to ask *you*," she said.

And smiled at him—ever so faintly.

This time she was successful. There was no restraining music upon the street now, no chaunted psalm to stay the kiss wherewith Maurice could not help (for the life of him) comforting Yvette. She looked so lovely and so wistful. She stood there so lost in a strait betwixt loyalty to her people and love for her friend. She had appealed to him—to him—Maurice Raith. Clearly (since she was his sister) it was his duty to stay those sobs as best he could, and to lay a comforting and brotherly salutation upon those trembling lips.

He did both. Or, rather, he was performing his duty with fidelity and a certain attention to detail exceedingly commendable, when a faint rustling noise made them both turn round. Yvette whipped the letter quickly behind her, but did not strive to withdraw herself out of Maurice Raith's encircling arm.

A tall slight figure, made slighter by a closely-clinging black dress, stood in the doorway. The face was white as with mortal sickness—the blue eyes hunted and very pitiful. For while Maurice Raith stood up warmly stockinged and slippered, in act to console his sister Yvette—to " kiss her tears away " —Flower-o'-the-Corn had entered unseen and unheard to ask a question of her hostess. She stood a moment watching them, with her throat swelling, her eyes dilating, the furniture of the room and the figures of the man and the woman in it spinning slowly round like puppets in a show. She had some knitting in her hand, which she held out with a dim idea of asking a question about it, and so getting away.

She had dropped a stitch, she said, in a strained voice, strange even to herself.

Then there came the roaring of a great ocean in her ears, and the next moment Flower-o'-the-Corn dropped insensible upon the floor.

CHAPTER XIX.

The Market Rate of Folly.

And at the sight all suddenly the being of Maurice Raith was changed within him. He had tried to screen himself before, now he cared nothing for self. An animal made comfortable, purring and arching its back with content, was suddenly changed to a man who knows that he has been duped.

Letting go the girl he had kissed the moment before, he ran to Flower-o'-the-Corn, who had fallen chill and limp upon the floor. Yvette followed him.

"No, you shall not touch her! I dare you to touch her!" he cried, starting up suddenly, why he knew not.

He was holding the slender form in his own strong arms, determinedly, almost possessively. The black dress scarce clasped her more closely or jealously.

Yvette Foy, who never fought so well as in a losing cause, affected to believe that he had suddenly gone mad, which was perhaps true.

"Better lay the preacher's daughter down," she said, quietly and yet with determination like that of a nurse taking command of a patient; "she has heard what I said about her father. After all, as I told you, she is not to blame. And she shall not suffer. I promise you that. It was, indeed, solely for her cause that I have been silent so long."

"No, no," panted Maurice Raith, holding the

unconscious girl the closer in his arms, "that has nothing to do with it. It cannot have. It is not true. I have listened too long to lying words. You shall not touch her. I will take her away—I myself, Maurice Raith. I am a brother officer of her father's, I tell you. He is no traitor, but the chaplain of a British regiment —Ardmillan's. I will be responsible for his honesty."

"Doubtless, doubtless," purred the accuser, "and in the meantime for that of his daughter also! These things are best judged of by young aide-de-camps of my Lord Marlborough's. They have had experience of many honesties—even as their master hath, or he is sore belied."

"Her father committed Mistress Frances to my charge before he went away," said Maurice, still holding the girl jealously in his arms. "As for you, you have made me ashamed before her—why, I do not know. She will never think well of me again!"

Yvette Foy began to laugh uncertainly.

"I only tried to be as kind to you as I knew how to be—if that be any fault, as it seems to be with you all of a sudden! But—well—I have never expected or experienced anything but injustice and ingratitude all my life. So why should I look for anything else now from a stranger and a man?"

But her words, the admired disorder of her dress and hair, even the pitiful squaring of her mouth, all fell dead upon the compassion of Maurice Raith with the warmth of Flower-o'-the-Corn's body striking slowly through to his breast.

"I tell you, I will take her away from here," he stammered, hotly; "it is not fit that she should dwell in the same house as you!"

"I remind you it is midnight and a storm," she said; "the girl is insensible from shock. She does

not go of her own accord. It will be an action so manly—so British, to take her away in that condition from her only protector. And besides, houses are not so easily found in a village and at this hour ! "

The irony would have daunted many a wiser, many an older man. But there was in Maurice Raith a consciousness of right intent, and the fear that the girl who had so easily entrapped himself would not scruple to exercise her wiles on the mind of Frances Wellwood, that he was resolved at all hazards to take her away, and hold himself responsible to her father upon his return.

He moved towards the door with his burden. Yvette Foy stood in front of him.

" You shall not," she said ; " she is my guest. Her character would be lost if she left this house with you, and in such a manner."

" Stand out of my way, I say, madam," cried Maurice, furiously ; " the character of Mistress Wellwood needs no other defender, in the absence of her father, than Captain Raith. Her father left her in his own hired house, and he gave me alone the right to protect her. I will take her there, and woe betide the man or woman who stands in our way ! "

" Father ! Father ! " cried Yvette Foy, suddenly lifting up her voice, lamentably, " help—help, I beseech you, help ! "

And from some chamber where he had been preparing himself for the repose of the night, Martin Foy flung himself into the room, having, like the old soldier he was, taken time to arm himself with his great Walloon sword, that he might be the more ready to succour his daughter in her need.

" Yvette, you cried—what is it, dearest ? " said the old man, standing in his turn aghast at the sight of

Maurice, supporting the insensible Frances in his arms.

"That man hath insulted us," she cried, pointing to Maurice Raith; "he hath spoken evil things—things that a young girl ought not to hear. Look—look! She has no longer any life or power to resist. He would carry her away from this place against her will. So, being afraid, I cried to you, my father! You will not fail me, I know!"

Old Martin Foy stamped on the ground with the old-fashioned fencer's *clack*, which had not then gone out of date.

"Hold, villain!" he cried, "stand still where you are. Put the girl down, or by Saint Anthony, I will stap three feet of good Ypres steel through your black vitals! Do you hear me? Down with the girl! You are in Martin Foy's house. Do as he bids you!"

And the old moustache advanced so fiercely that there is no saying what might have happened (Maurice being encumbered with his burden), had not Billy Marshall, hearing the sound of voices in high dispute, and his master's among them, come running upstairs to the great living-parlour, where Yvette's logs (set for Maurice's comfort) were still sparkling and glowing on the hearth, as olive roots will long after they are wanted. Billy arrived in some haste, taking the steps three at a time, and bursting in upon them like an incursion of the enemy at the sack of a city. The gipsy did not take time to have the situation explained to him. He saw his master with a lovely girl in his arms. *That* needed no explanation. Even so, with half a dozen foes to withstand him, and only one good friendly Marshall to keep the most immediate points off, he had in his time borne away Bet (who had been a Faa, and by no means so heavy then as she had since

become), so much to her satisfaction, that she had ever afterwards proved herself a loving, faithful, and obedient wife to him, even as the law of the land requires.

Therefore Billy took no severe views of the little circumstance of finding his master with a lady in his arms. Rather he thought the better of him. Next, however, he saw a man with a yard-long sword, menacing his master, and though Billy did not speak French he understood very well the language of deadly threat. The sword was what Billy, in his contempt for rapiers and all blades which were not made for both cutting and thrusting, called a "poking-stick." Obviously, however, the man was threatening his master, and the point of the rapier was very near. These things were sometimes sharp. It mattered nothing that the man was known to him as the owner of the house. If Maurice had been carrying off Martin Foy's daughter under the other arm, Billy would have stayed just as short a time to debate upon the morality of the proceeding. He simply seized the first weapon which came to his hand. This happened to be an ornamental chair, brought thither by Yvette Foy, and bottomed with wicker-work of the rustic sort. With this he interposed manfully between his master and Martin Foy. The old soldier made a pass at him as the more immediate adversary, and the point of the Walloon sword, passing between the withes of the seat, narrowly grazed the back of Billy's brawny hand which grasped the chair at the most convenient point for both offensive and defensive.

The next moment Martin Foy felt his hand suddenly light in the air. The Walloon rapier had been twisted bodily out of his fingers, and, while he stood idly wondering what had happened, Billy, with the chair thrown aside, and the blade glittering in his hand,

was asking for orders from his master. "*Wull I bide and stick him while ye are oxterin' aff the lasses?*"

* * * * *

But the desires of Maurice Raith were neither so murderous nor yet so generously uxorious as Billy's speech might have portended. Instead, he ordered Billy to gather up his belongings and follow him.

"I'm thinkin'," said the gipsy, shrewdly, "that Billy Marshall had better maybes come alang wi' ye a bittock, an' gang back for the horses and the bits o' duds after. Bet will bide where she is till I bid her stir, to see that nocht is stown awa'. *An' are ye sure, na, that ye are only wantin' yin o' thae lasses?*"

Being reassured on this point (and, indeed, it was a great relief to Maurice to reach a state of assurance himself), Billy abruptly bade his master to "Gang on, then, wi' the wumman!" while he himself with the captured Walloon "poking-stick" kept at bay the master of the Auberge of the Bon Chrétien, and (what was considerably more difficult) his daughter also.

Now, Maurice had not felt the weight of the slight girlish form while the excitement was upon him, but now as he descended the narrow winding stairs of the inn, and still more when he found himself facing the full burst of the storm over the naked and wind-swept Causses, the beads of perspiration burst from his brow, and he fronted the headlong rush of the tempest with a kind of fear lest he should prove unequal to the task he had taken upon him.

But the very bitterness of the blast drove the oxygen into his lungs, as it were, in a compressed state, and in a trice recovered him.

At the same time he began to feel slight stirrings and shiftings of position in the burden which he had set himself to carry. And with these came Maurice's

first qualm of doubt as to his action, quickly mounting into fear and shame, so that even in the bitter Arctic cold of the Larzac night, with the ground white with frozen snow underfoot, he felt the blood rush warm and red to his brow.

In his first indignation against Yvette Foy he had taken Frances Wellwood from what might prove to be her only home. What had he to offer her in exchange—especially in such a place? Moreover, the vision of how she had seen him last, came back to him through that triple armour of excellent intentions which usually supports the young in their most remarkable and extravagant actions.

The night was dark in itself, but lit as all clear nights of the Causses are, with an infinite multitude of stars. Across the north towards the valley of the Tarn, and arching the grim Causse Noir with a mural crown of weird and awful greenness, the broadsword of the Northern lights flickered and smote.

Maurice's first intention was to make his way towards the gateways of the Templars' Gate. At either the eastern or the western one he would surely find a caretaker. At least, if no better might be, poor old drunken Elise.

La Cavalerie was not even then a large place, and Maurice with his burden took long strides. They were not long in arriving. Both houses over the twin gates stood up dark and cold. But upon the westernmost doorway Billy Marshall thundered with a sword hilt—that, indeed, of the despised "poking-stick" which he had brought with him from a feeling that any weapon was better than none.

It was some time, however, before he produced any effect, and in the meantime the continuance of the slight but unmistakable movements warned Maurice

that in a few moments he would have to reckon, not only with the difficulty of providing a home for Frances Wellwood, but with the state of mind in which that young lady should find herself upon returning to consciousness.

Had Maurice possessed the experience of men ancient and wedded, he would undoubtedly have leaned his lovely burden against the nearest door and clanged the knocker before speeding out upon the waste. But Maurice was young and ardent, with but little experience of women. Fortified by Billy Marshall and over-confident in the power of his own persuasiveness, he vaingloriously stood his ground.

At last the little wicket door, which as usual opened in the midst at about the height of a man's head, was cautiously drawn ajar. A red and bloated visage appeared thereat.

"Open and admit your mistress!" commanded Maurice, whose temper had not been improving as his arms grew more weary.

"I am my own mistress, and this is my house," responded the woman, with a drunken tee-hee of laughter. "Take yours where you will; I will have none of them here!"

"But this is Mademoiselle Frances Wellwood come back to her father's house. Admit her this instant, I command you!"

Maurice was rapidly losing his temper.

"Canny, canny, sir, wi' a drucken woman!" counselled Billy, over his master's shoulder.

But Maurice had little more time to make up his mind. The movements which had been no more than involuntary stirrings, evincing a lack of ease and general discontent, became the convulsive strivings of a woman trying to loose herself from constraint.

"Where am I? Where am I?" cried Flower-o'-the-Corn, hysterically, "set me down! Who are you?"

For once Maurice Raith, aide-de-camp to my Lord Marlborough, had his hands quite sufficiently full. He decided first to get the door open, and with a furious expression he ordered the old woman at the wicket to undo the bolt at her life's peril.

But she, being at that point of excessive virtue only reached by the nine-tenths drunk, now raised her voice in exuberant protest.

"No man," she averred, "shall come to my well-doing, well-deserving, well-considered house at this time of the night in order to foist houseless young women upon me. Madame Elise is my name—one well known and reputed in the whole village of La Cavalerie for over forty years——"

At this point Billy suddenly thrust the Walloon blade through the wicket with the idea of jamming it, and so by the introduction of an arm, forcing an entrance into the house. But his scheme, excellent in itself, miscarried.

There was a spare grating of which he knew nothing in the inside, which now shut with a spring, and lo! the Walloon "poking stick" justified its reputation by snapping close to the guard and leaving nothing but the hilt in Billy Marshall's hand.

The wicket went to with a determined clang, and from the soft subsiding hush which came from behind it, it seemed probable that the defender of the citadal had quietly succumbed to the joint effects of her own unaided valour and the courage so long denominated Dutch.

But Maurice had no time to think of her.

Frances Wellwood was standing before him—the

cloak in which he had hastily wrapped her fallen from her shoulders, and her eyes in the darkness flashing like those of Yvette Foy herself.

"I demand to be told where I am, and why I am in this place?" she said.

She had her feet on the ground by this time, but not having yet fully recovered, she swayed a little. Maurice's arm went instinctively about her. She shrank away from his touch as from a personal defilement.

"No, no!" she cried, the fierce wind of the Causses whipping a kind of memory into her mind by the very tingling chill of her lips and cheek; "go back to her! I have nothing to say to you—to either of you! And why have you brought me here? It is night. Is it always to be night? It was night when—when—I saw you! Oh!—(she stamped her foot)—go away from me. I cannot bear the sight of you, I tell you—go!"

"Will the collean no turrish? Will the quean no gang quaite?" whispered Billy Marshall under his breath; "will we hae to gie her a touch o' the black-thorn, think ye? I mind when Bet——"

"Hold your tongue, sirrah, or you will drive me crazy," cried Maurice, suddenly.

"Ye micht do waur," urged Billy; "there was Bet wad never hae pitten her mind to do it quaite-like but for a knap or twa ower the croon wi' the black-thorn, the bonny mither o' the slae! Better sune nor syne—I'm advisin' ye for your guid!"

Flower-o'-the Corn stood a moment, the hair blowing about her face. She put up her hand a time or two to clear her eyes. Her thin black dress, wind-driven, clipped her ankles tightly.

"This is my father's house—my house," she said, with an air of relief. "I will go in. No—I thank

you ! " she added, as Maurice approached to assist or warn her.

She rapped, first timidly, and then louder upon the door. The wicket flew open again, and such a torrent of abuse and evil language poured out upon the night that Flower-o'-the-Corn set her hands to her ears with instinctive horror, and fairly turned and ran out upon the waste. A sentinel started forward in her path.

" Do not fire, I bid you ! " cried Maurice loudly, in French. He ran after the girl, but she turned upon him with all the desperation of a gentle thing cornered and fighting for its life. She drew a *skean dhu* from her garter, and threatened herself with it as he approached.

" Do you hear ? Do you hear ? " she cried. " I swear it—by my father's God, who will forgive me ! If you touch me or so much as make one step forward nearer to me, I will kill myself with this knife."

They were close together. The wide barren Causses were white-sprinkled with sparse snow. The green pulsing of the aurora came more and more fitfully from behind the hills. Maurice could see it gleam on the blade of the knife which Frances held to her throat and on the whites of her eyes.

He hesitated, and in that moment Flower-o'-the-Corn had turned and fled away across the glooming wastes, towards the barren crater-like ridge where Maurice had made his first camp.

The young man stood petrified, while Billy Marshall at his back whispered, "Aye, aye, maybes noo ye'll attend to what I say the neist time ! Had ye gi'en her a knap wi' the rung in time, there wad hae been nane o' this traikin' an' gallivantin' aneath the fower winds o' heaven ! Na, juist yae wee bit persuasion the first nicht, an' Bet (though as rank a Faa as ever steppit)

has been a' her life the douce, weel-conduckit, sonsy, obedient woman ye ken the day ! "

In the meantime Maurice stood outside the town gate, Billy Marshall at his right hand, an amazed Camisard sentry watching events with black doubts of his commander's honesty rising in his heart, while over the vast green-lit levels of the Causse Flower-o'-the-Corn sped unchecked into the darkness and chill of a winter's night.

CHAPTER XX.

The Mystery of the Crystal.

Maurice stood for a long minute, dazed and drunken with a great astonishment. Billy was at his elbow with the best, but most unworkable, counsels as to how to treat colleens who, to their own disadvantage, refused to "turrish." But all could not encourage or console Maurice Raith. By his own folly he had sent into deadly danger the only girl he ever loved.

So, at least, he told himself, while Billy Marshall continued to remind him that he had told him so, and the Camisard sentinel by the gate solemnly resumed his beat, as if washing his hands of the whole matter.

"The lassie's gane, that's undooted," said Billy, with belated penetration; "an' sae far as I can see, ye hae sma' chance o' gettin' her back by standin' sumphin' there. Gin ye had ta'en my advice an' brocht awa' the baith o' them, yin wad hae balanced the ither. I mysel' hae often fand it that wey in the carryin' o' boxes—no to speak o' percels!"

To no part of this did Maurice deign to answer, save to the indubitable fact that the girl was gone, declaring that the best they could do was to take counsel together and decide what had better be done to get her back. It was a freezing night, with a light drift of snow blowing, and the surface of the Causse hard as the nether millstone.

No tracks would lie for a minute upon such a night, and they must do the best they could with the senses God had given them—which, as Maurice thought with some reason, were in his case, at least, no great matter for boasting.

La Cavelerie lies high—on the very ridge and backbone of the Larzac. No wind blows but searches it like a sieve. From verge to horizon verge there is no cover the height of a gooseberry bush, and even the earthen ramparts which the Camisards had thrown up, though no more than a foot or two in height, actually afforded some shelter to the village from the piercing winds.

Yet it was on such a night, in a thin black dress of some soft stuff, that Flower-o'-the-Corn had fled out into the darkness of the bleakest, though not the highest, Causse in France.

If it would have done Frances Wellwood the least good Maurice Raith would gladly have put a pistol to his head there and then and shot himself out of hand. But he knew that the girl was gone on his account, and it was his duty to bring her back, if possible.

A thought occurred to him. At the time it seemed like an inspiration. Of course it was an impossibility, a thing to be laughed at, yet, nevertheless, somehow he could not get it out of his head.

"Catinat! Yes, Catinat!" Stranger things had happened. There might be something in his second sight after all. He had heard of it in Scotland. At least it was worth the trying!

"Let us go and knock up Catinat!" he said, hoarsely.

To his surprise Billy caught eagerly at his suggestion.

"Ye hae mair sense than I lookit for," he cried; "if

ony body can jalloose where the daft lassie wull hae hidden hersel', it's him. I hae heard tell that when he was a youngster amang the laddie-boys he was *a gye yin!* That was afore he took up wi' the prophetin' an' sic-like! Catinat's the verra man for ye, that is, if ye can get haud o' him. But he is mair like to tak' ye through a word-for-word exposeetion o' the Buik o' Solomon his Sang, than to help ye to get back your ain sweetheart! Aye, a deil sicht mair like!"

Nevertheless, since the thing was worth trying, to Catinat they went. It was, as Billy had prognosticated, somewhat difficult to get the prophet down to business.

The minister's daughter had run away in a fit of fear and that hysterical nervousness which comes so easily to woman. Well, he had heard of such-like, but there was no exact parallel for it in the Scriptures that he knew of, unless it were in the Song of Songs, which is Solomon's——

"Didna I tell ye?" whispered Billy, triumphantly, over his chief's shoulder.

"For there we hear tell of the Shullamite that went about seeking her love until she should find him—though in this instance I understand that the similitude does not apply. But," he turned sharply upon the military chief of La Cavalerie, "answer me this before I touch the matter with tip of finger—lies anything of stain upon your conscience, aught that you would be more loath to tell to the girl's father than to me?"

"Nothing, I swear it!" said Maurice, lifting up his hand solemnly.

"Swear not at all," said Catinat, catching him up by the wrist and putting his hand down again. "What

is a man but his naked word? If I had not believed in your honesty, would I have permitted these poor sheep to obey you for so much as an instant? Would I not have done unto you even as did Ehud in the summer parlour at Gilgal? But I did not. Because, though I discerned that there was lightness in your thoughts—yea, lighter than the wool of the first fleecing of the rams of Nebaioth, vain with the vanity of the men that gathered to Jephthah in the land of Tob, yet for all that I said within me, 'This is a true man—this!'"

And, having come to a standstill at this point, Maurice Raith, who was all on fire within, demanded of the prophet if he could tell where at that moment the girl was.

Catinat looked at Maurice and shook his head. Then he glanced at Billy Marshall and asked, "Is he innocent—that is to say, simple—like his look and speech? Or is he even as other men, come up from beneath the grinding-wheels?"

"He is even as other men!" said Maurice, wonderingly.

"Then he will not do for me, any more than you," he answered. "I have not the second sight myself," he went on to explain, "as it is said that your Scots mountainards have, but only the power of making others see—though, I own, not as Cavalier hath, who can make a thousand men and women see and believe the thing he will. Yet, abide you, I will bring one who will see all your desire!"

Catinat dwelt in a plain-faced little house with one gable to the main road, mean and poor, with pig-runs below; and so, betaking himself to the door, he went across the court and returned shortly with a half-grown lad, his sleepy eyes starting from his head,

his hair a mere haystack, his lower lip dropped into the shape of a V, slack and pendulous, yet always more or less on the quiver, like jelly turned from a shape. He appeared to be about seventeen or eighteen, knock-kneed and needing weekly additions to his small-clothes. Of his simplicity there could be no question. Indeed, Catinat explained the matter of his want in his own presence in plain set phrases.

"This is one Antoine Oliver—a mere idiot, an innocent, almost a crètin, but left here by the Spanish gipsies; therefore not to be trusted alone with silver or gold! Otherwise he hath not the sense to conduct himself reasonably. Antoine, turn round!"

The oaf turned himself unwillingly about, like one about to be whipped in the presence of his school-fellows. A patch of viscous orange appeared vividly impressed on the broadest part of his small-clothes.

"There!" cried Catinat, "what did I tell you? Go fetch the rod, Antoine—the rod of many birches which stands behind the henhouse door. You have been at it again! Gentlemen, this boy at certain hours of the day or night by a certain strange access of folly takes himself for a brooding fowl, and will sit on as many as two dozen eggs at once—yes, now when they are at their dearest, and a hennery is next in value to a gold mine. For this he hath oft been punished by me and shall be again."

The great oaf burst out into a loud *boo-hoo* of lament.

"Indeed, sir," he pleaded, "they were not your eggs this time, yours are much richer in yolk! Look you, they are those of old Elise at the Gatehouse, whom I desired to punish for her drunkenness."

"The point is well taken," said Catinat, "but I

will only consent to overlook the fault if so be that you will search in the crystal for me."

The youth gave a yet louder cry and promptly began to untruss.

"I would rather have the birch," he said, "the birch smarts and is done with; but after the crystal ball Antoine is not his own man for as many as three days."

"He hath probably hit on the truth there," whispered the prophet.

"But, Antoine," said Catinat, aloud, in a soothing voice, "see this man. He is the commander of the soldiers here, and can keep them from taking you away to serve in the trenches. Also I will let you off from a whole week of attendance at early service in the church. Also——"

He displayed a silver coin suggestively in the lamplight.

"I will do it—I will do it!" cried the lad; "give me the crystal, and I will speak the thing I see. But first tell me what is it I am to look for—and where!"

"Look along the face of the Causses to the north," said Catinat, calmly, laying his hand on the boy's rough head. He passed his long sensitive fingers this way and that over it, and lo! an erect and bristling crest followed the direction of his hand even when the fingers did not touch the actual hair.

"I see them," said the boy, his eyes on the globe of solid crystal long buried in the deeps of the *goufjre* of Padirac, waterworn and rounded, and now polished with rouge and the friction of the palm of the hand, the two best polishers in the world.

"They are white and grey, and, oh, so cold!" he said, shuddering.

"Look closer—closer still, good Antoine," com-

manded Catinat; "you see no person—no living creature?"

"I see a wolf—two wolves—no, a pack!" he cried, eagerly.

Maurice would have sprung to his feet and run out as he was. But this Catinat would in no wise permit.

"No," he said, soothingly, "it is often thus. It may not be so after all. They often see wolves and wild beasts at first—that which comes readiest. Do not be alarmed. We shall get at the root of the matter before long, and that directly."

He pressed his hand lightly, but compellingly, on the back of the boy's neck, forcing his head downwards till his eyes were within six inches of the crystal.

"Now tell me what you see; observe carefully! Follow the line of the Causses towards Saint Veran and the luggage-cradle. What do you see?"

"I see two men—no, a woman and a man," said the boy, dropping into an even pained voice; "they are talking together eagerly. She has much to tell him. He holds her under his cloak—holds her closely, thus."

Again Maurice was making for the door, but Catinat checked him with a look and a shake of the head.

"He is a crétin, I tell you," he said, "do not expect too much. We shall get at the truth presently if we do not hurry him."

"*There*, I have lost them; the man was in a soldier's uniform, I saw him plainly," cried the boy; "like the men who came last year and tried to kill us all, when poor Antoine hid so long in the cowshed. But they have gone out of sight. I can see them no more. Let me go!"

At this moment the touch of Catinat must have tightened either in actual grip or in electric tension on the back of the boy's neck, for he squeaked like a mouse.

"I will look—I will speak true. I will look all the

way from the Millau road even to the reservoir of Nant."

"Look, then, boy, and carefully!" said Catinat, and his voice, even to the eager Maurice, sounded wrapt and far away. Billy Marshall, an adept and past-master in all mysteries, stood silent, wondering what new sort of hanky-panky he had come across—willing to be instructed, however, but still unconvinced that one touch of the sloe-thorn shillelagh in time would not have saved at least nine broken crowns.

The boy continued to gaze, his eyes growing fixed and luminous as they concentrated themselves on the crystal globe.

"Ah, now at last I see her," he said, wearily, as indeed he did everything. "She is alone, in a black dress, running sometimes this way and that, and sometimes standing and holding her hand to her breast——"

Maurice gasped, but Catinat remained calm, with his hand on the boy's neck.

"Yes—yes, good boy, Antoine, you speak truth this time. It will not last long. You see one girl alone, you say, her hand on her breast—no French officer with her, no gang of wolves? Good boy, good boy!"

"But I saw these other two; yes, I saw them, even if you birch me for it I saw them plainly."

"Well, never mind that—the girl—the girl with her hand to her breast," said Maurice, eagerly, "what was she like?"

The boy at once recognised the new note in the interrogative.

"What is that to you?" he said, regaining with a bound his native sullenness. There was almost a rejoicing note in his voice, as having chanced upon one whom he could disobey with impunity. Catinat lifted a dusting-switch and dealt him the very

slightest blow with it across his cheek, so light that many a caress had been heavier.

"The pain of that will teach you ever after to speak respectfully to those who are my guests in my house," he cried, angrily. "It smarts, does it not, worse than the birch?"

"Oh, it does, it does!" wailed the boy. "It was a fearful blow. Oh, my head, my head!"

Maurice would have stepped forward to save the boy, even with the evidence of his senses that a feather might have dealt a harder blow. But the mere suggestion was enough for the super-excited state of the boy's mind.

"Go on!" said Catinat, sternly, "we have no time to wait all night on you!"

The boy continued, between suppressed sobs of dismay and pain.

"I see only the white waste—I cannot see the girl—neither the one with the hand to her breast who waited and looked round—nor the other!"

"There was no other," said Catinat, firmly—"nor any wolves!"

"Very well, then," said the boy, wincing away with his feather-smitten cheek; "she was not there, but I thought it. Tell me what I am to think, and I will think it. Are you not my master?"

"No," said Catinat, severely, "tell me what you see, and that exactly. Look further afield. You have seen her once. You have seen in what direction she was moving. Look again—or——"

"Oh, I will, I will" (again with the mouse-like squeak). "I see her now—plainly I see her. She is within the circle of the Rochers above the Dourbie, near where the Saint Veran cradle is set up. She is sitting on a rock and looking at a star. She is rubbing her hands. I think she is very cold."

"Has she a cloak about her?" said Maurice, anxiously.

The natural turned his head uncertainly, as if inquiring from his master whether he was required to answer extraneous and possibly discomposing questions, but before he had time to reply, Billy Marshall came in with Maurice's cloak across his arm.

"Where did you get that?" cried his master.

"She," said Billy, with a strong and contemptuous accent on the pronoun, "left it lying on the ground that she might run frae ye the faster! Did I no tell ye that I was richt? A wee bit knap wi' the black-thorn—oh, it's nocht ava, but it wad hae made a' the differ! And they are that thankfu' for it the neist mornin'! Certes, an' fond o' ye—ye wadna believe! There's Bet has hardly been able to bear me-oot o' her sicht, ever since I gied her the bit cloot wi' the clickie afore puttin' her to her bed. The thick end o' a guid rung is the best 'Sleep-ye-soond-bonny-bairnie' that ye will get in ony apothecary's hall. And no yae bawbee to pay for 't! Guid kens, it kind o' mak's them wonderfu' set on ye the neist mornin' when they wauken croose and gled that it's a' by wi'! Bet there could fair hae etten me, she was that pleased-like wi' me! But ye wadna tak puir Billy's advice. Na, he kenned nocht aboot wee-men, an' sae it's come to this!"

"Well," said his master, sternly, "take the cloak, and what arms are needful and follow with me to the place where the waggons were captured——"

"'Airms,' says he, 'airms an' a cloak,' quo' Billy Marshall! What do ye tak' Billy Marshall for? D'ye think that he would gang twenty yairds ower the door in siccan an unhamely place without

bringing a' the airms that are committed to him—keepit as they should be keepit—and wi' the poother an' ball for ilka yin, a' in pooches by their nainsels ? "

And at the word the gipsy undid his belt and showed a perfect armament of pistols and short swords—or hangers as they were then called.

" Bet's oot there wi' the muckle guns and the braidswords ! " he added.

" How do you know that ? " demanded Maurice, quickly.

Billy looked at him shrewdly, yet a trifle sadly, as one who had failed to profit by the opportunities of acquiring information when these were tendered to him.

" Hoo do I ken ?—Weel, I juist ken, that's a' ! And ye shall prove my words for yoursel', Maister Maurice (I canna aye be mind-mindin' your ither name), and gin ye had ta'en my advice and ' knappit ' your bit wench in time, she wad hae been lying prood and snug ayont ye at this meenit, instead o' freezin' to daith oot on the wild hills ! "

" Hold your accursed tongue, will you ? " cried Maurice, infuriated ; " come and help us to look."

" Dress yourself properly, then," answered Billy ; " an' do your cloak upon you. The habit you wear is frozen stiff and is only summer thick at any rate ! "

A dish of cold water was standing on a little dripping board, at which some former married tenant of Catinat's house had washed dishes. Catinat seized this and dashed the contents fair in the face of the seer. The woolly-headed boy came to himself with a start, and would have dropped the crystal had not the Prophet snatched it out of his lax and feeble hands, and restored it to a bag of faded black velvet, through the unclosed seams of which it peeped with jewel-like brilliance of suggestion.

CHAPTER XXI.

Madame la Maréchale.

When Flower-o'-the-Corn fled out upon the waste she had no idea of what she would do, save to put as much distance as possible between herself and those who had (in her opinion) wronged her.

Maurice she held doubly guilty. For though he was by no means her lover, she had, at least, expected other things from him. And now, she had found him—well, she could not picture to herself how she had found him for the pain in her heart. Besides, had he not crowned his iniquity by carrying her off literally? She had been held in his arms at the very moment when she came to herself. And as for Yvette Foy, how could any girl be so false, so wicked? Had she not time and again declared that this Pierre the waggoner, this young man who had brought the message to the village, was a traitor double-dyed? And had she not? Again there came the shooting pain—the burning, uprising shame! Oh! were there no true folk at all in the world, women or men? Except her father, that is? She did not doubt him ever.

She clasped her hands upon each other even as Antoine had seen her in the crystal stone, and they were as cold as ice. Then, all at once, there came upon Flower-o'-the-Corn a wild unreasoning fear—the terror of pursuit. She seemed to be followed by a pack

of hounds as in the grey fearful dream-sleeps of the Indian Bhang-eater. She could hear their yelping chorus, now higher and now lower, as one or other took up the leadership.

She turned abruptly, and ran on. Perhaps it was well she did so. At least, the action kept her from freezing to death. She continued thus till the breath was almost out of her body. Before her, under the pulsing green glow of the Aurora, the toothed edges of the volcanic crater stood up. She paused, less because she was out of breath than because she seemed to have some dim sort of previous knowledge of the place, to which, all unwitting, her feet had carried her.

Once she heard a crying as of wolves across the waste, the long-drawn sneering howl which (once heard) is never forgotten. Anything less like the "giving tongue" of a pack cannot well be imagined.

But to Frances Wellwood, who had that night supped so full of terrors, this brought no new anxiety, though the sound would have sent every Caussenard for shelter to the nearest house, even if it had been that of his worst enemy.

But Flower-o'-the-Corn stood there, only conscious of the deadly insult and shame that had been put upon her. The bitter upland night, the frost-tingling stars, the howl of the wolf-pack—these were as nothing to the pain in her heart.

The two in whom she had been learning to trust—one of them almost in spite of herself—had betrayed her. Her house of cards had fallen. She could never trust man or woman again. And then the words, foul and horrible, spoken before all these men, with which she had been pursued from her own door! Was it true what the beldame had said that her father had gone without paying his rent? Why this added insult?

Yet she knew the thing might very well be, from sheer forgetfulness and Patrick Wellwood's habitual carelessness.

But Yvette Foy (that thrice-wicked deceiver) had spoken so kindly that she had accompanied her without even asking a question. Perhaps (who knows) the hint to refuse admission had come first from her.

So in the bitter chill of the night Frances Wellwood meditated, while the toothed edges of the Causses rose up black all about her, and the great limestone shapes began to resemble old stumps of teeth blanching in skeleton gums. Thus she was sitting, growing slowly chill and chiller, when all at once she was startled by the sound of uproarious mirth about her.

A sudden flashing of lanterns, a sudden explosion of laughter, neither very wise nor very kindly, brought the girl to herself. Rough hands seized her. She cried out, and the first words she spoke were a confession of weakness.

"Maurice, Maurice!" she said involuntarily. And then at the mere sound of her voice she started to recall the gay brightness of the Brabant corn and herself standing elbow deep in it, with the young soldier blushing beneath her, his hands parting the yellow broom.

"A pretty maid, eh, Joseph? By my faith, yes," cried one rough-looking soldier with great bandoliers across his breast; "tell me that you do not believe in the grotto of the fairies after this! Why, we could not be better off if we were farmers-general. The Maréchal himself, with his Madame la Maréchale, will live no more comfortably than we! Besides which, we will not give the wench marching leave quite so often. I am in command of this party, eh, Joseph? And I say—'Keeps!' No 'halvings' to merchandise of this sort. No, no!"

"Nay, old scrubby goat!" cried another, "see, the little thing is a-cold. Do you not understand, you are a brute to stand there, cloaked to the grey moustache and never offer her an inch of shelter? She shall come, not an inch nearer you, but to the kindest of the company. Here, my pretty one, is a good half of a soldier's cloak to be comfortable in. Aye, many a pretty lass, many a dainty, hath snuggled down there, and liked very well that same old Brandenburg redingote. Come, my pretty, so!"

"I tell you no!" cried another, holding up his lantern to Flower-o'-the-Corn's frightened face (for now she had fallen among the wolves indeed), "neither one of you has the least claim. E'en let the maid choose for herself. I outrank you both, for the matter of that, since I carry the colours! You have nothing but huge old grey moustaches, an odour of rum, and much talk of what you have done in your youth. As if that had any weight with a young thing fit to be the granddaughter of any of you! For shame, to fright a child so with your rough talk. Come hither to me, my dear, and you and I will talk apart! I promise you none of them shall harm you. And you shall have no troublesome questions to answer either—such as, 'How came you at night out upon the wild Causses near a Camisard haunt of rebels and traitors?' I can save you from all that. Why else should I be trusted with the banner by my officer, but that it should cover an bosom as innocent as thine!"

"Stand out of the way, Victor Cayet," cried yet another, abruptly, shouldering the speaker, his lantern and his folded banner out of the way. "I tell you here comes La Maréchale herself! And it is as much as our heads are worth to have any rough jesting in her presence."

"Tut! As to that, she is but the lady Maréchale of the campaign, I warrant you—think you de Montrevel would saddle himself in perpetuity with a Camisard wife?"

"Hush, lads, here she comes!"

* * * * *

"Wretches, assassins, I will have all of you hanged by the Provost Marshal," cried a richly dressed lady, riding in among them upon a white horse with a liberal use of whip and spur.

"Ah, dear lady," cried one, in a humble whining tone, "that is by no means how you should treat poor sons of the church. Do we not know your ladyship every one?"

"Aye, verily!" cried the lady; "and so well does the lady know you that she could wager the last Louis-d'or in her pouch that you talked very differently five minutes ago to the poor girl there, whom you hold your prisoner. Stand away—I would speak to her!"

"Your ladyship will allow that she *is* our prisoner of war, and stands at her peril amongst us, till a sum is paid in ransom to us poor men!"

"I will see that the money is paid. I know you, Joseph, and also that the Maréchal hath never gotten any good of you or the like of you!"

"Indeed, my lady, I speak not for myself," said the man, "but as Cornely here, the standard-carrier, well remarks, what is the wench doing so near to a noted rebel haunt—alone and on foot?"

"If it comes to that, what am I doing?" said the other, boldly. "Have you anything to reflect upon me?"

The men pushed each other with the elbow, and at last Cornely spoke up. His first act was to disavow Joseph.

"This man Joseph hath done nothing but speak to our hurt," he began. "Inquire of the girl herself, I pray you. Have we done her any harm? Or have I—who have chiefly spoken with her—offered anything but kindness? She will remember me, because I held my lantern close to my face so that she might know me again. By this she will remember. I have a long fair moustache, and when rudeness was offered, I bade all 'Stand back!' This I did because, carrying the flag of the King, I was in a sort of manner o' ways in command here. And so I told them. She will remember me—ask her, a man with a long fair moustache, good to look upon, that offered her nothing but kindness——"

"Oh, have done with the eternity of your clack!" cried the lady, who had dismounted by this time. "While you talk the girl will freeze to death. It is a cold night to die in, even with your chances of the everlasting burning! Here, Cornely, since you are so prodigal with your favours, lend me your cloak. You have another at Millau. I know, for I have seen you swaggering about with it a-Sundays."

"Your ladyship has been pleased to remark me in it—a blue cloth made very long, lined with a crimson silk?"

"Remarked you—yes—who would not?" cried the lady. "Aye, and spoken of it to the Marshal, too."

"Your ladyship is too kind," said Cornely. "I would I had it here that I might spread it at your most honoured feet——"

"The other will do, if it be (as it looks) but a horse blanket turned inside out. Anything to wrap the shivering girl in, out of the chill airs of these Causses. And now leave us. I would speak to her a moment. There is no fear."

"Have we your lady's word for the ransom?" put in Joseph, who was still spiteful at his discomfiture.

"Word, what need you of words?" flashed Madame la Maréchale, to the full as brusquely; "go, take your arms and retire behind the rocks yonder for a quarter of an hour. We are not birds of the air that we can fly. Take your posts all about us, if you will. I will give no word. Who am I, that I should bandy words at this time of the day with such cattle as you?"

"Well, a prisoner of war is a prisoner of war in these days, so be she is pretty and young," said Joseph, bitterly; "also seeing that our Maréchal is what he is."

The lady stamped her foot.

"For the last time, I tell you, go back! Otherwise I will complain to the Maréchal—in which case more would embrace the whipping-post at Millau than would miss their chances of this fair prisoner of war. Once for all, I tell you—go!"

The men, especially those of Joseph's faction, withdrew grumbling, but not daring openly to disobey the Maréchal's lady.

"At all events, I will make sure of her beast, and the other hath none," said Joseph, shrewdly, leading it away and leaving the Lady Maréchale in her riding habit and furs to speak with the shivering girl, who was by this time wrapped in Cornely's cloak. That ornament of the King's irregular forces was now eagerly watching from behind a jagged tooth of limestone what should be the fate of his second best garment. For, as he put it to all honest and fair-minded men, it was manifestly impossible to wear a thing of beauty like the blue-clothed, scarlet-lined promenade cloak on such mad midnight rides as their leaders

had been taking them of late into the midst of the wild Camisard hills.

"Farther—stand farther back there, else I will post you for a set of eavesdroppers and thieves, and——"

But whatever else the spirited lady had to say was drowned in the noise of the simultaneous withdrawal caused by her words.

"And if you, Joseph Peynet, let go my horse, so that I take cold from waiting out here on the Causses, where I am on the Maréchal's own business, as you know right well, de Montrevel himself will hold you responsible. And what is more, if I know him, it will not be the skin of your back alone that will pay the debt, but some little stretching of your neck as well,—which, as I see it, is quite long enough and ugly enough already!"

The two women were left alone.

Madame la Maréchale quickly threw aside the great fur-lined hood which had hidden her face. She undid a cloak (of which, having been on horseback, she appeared to wear an infinite number) and threw it about Frances. Then she caught her impulsively and affectionately about the neck and burst into tears.

"Oh, what must you think of me," she cried, "you who are ever distant and cold do not know what poor women have to bear for the men they love—aye, how they must even for policy appear to be kind to those whom they loathe and disesteem. Forgive me, dearest Frances. I have come out hither to save you from these bad men!"

And lo! before her, mysteriously clear as the green aurora could make her, stood Yvette Foy!

And Flower-o'-the-Corn, in a mist of amazement, pressed both her hands to her head saying, "Oh, God,

God! I am going out of my mind. Let me die quickly!"

"Tut—nonsense! Nothing of the sort," said Yvette, who was always practical-minded in all circumstances, "you will live to be a grandmother yet—aye, and be glad of the little experience I am giving you wherewithal to help your granddaughters out of scrapes. Now listen to me! Forget what you have seen, or believe that I did it wholly for your good!"

"That I can never do!" said Frances, speaking more frigidly even than the cold that was stiffening her through her wrappings of fur and horse-blankets.

Yvette kept her arms tightly about the girl, in spite of the fact that her friend remained as unresponsive as a doll carved out of wood.

"But I think I can show you cause why you should think less ill of me," she said, gently, like one who suffers wrongs she cannot help.

"That can you never, if you were to talk till Doomsday! I have found you out, Yvette Foy," responded Flower-o'-the-Corn, with accentuated bitterness.

"No, I am with you," said the other, clasping her yet tighter. "If I were *only* Yvette Foy, the innkeeper's daughter, you would be right not to forgive me. But—I trust you with the secret—my life is in it, and the lives of far more and far worthier than I. Yet I trust you—I, poor Yvette, have a right to be called Madame la Maréchale de Montrevel, even as you heard them name me just now!"

"It is only one more of your deceits—there is no end to them. I have good reason to know that!" retorted Frances, not yielding the least from her attitude of stiffened disdain.

"Nay, but not this time," pleaded Yvette. "It has been necessary; I allow you have good reason

to distrust me. But that has been the fault of circumstances, rather than any lack of keeping faith. I am—do not forget it—the wife of the Marshal commanding the French troops in these mountains. You, who have such high ideals of duty and affection, tell me what is better than that a wife should strive in all ways to serve the interests of her husband. And have I not done so? Was I not ordered to find out the secrets of this foolish young officer of Marlborough's? And if you had not interrupted us, would I not have turned him inside out like an empty sack—aye, this very night, and the despatch would have gone to my husband in the morning? It was for this that these 'Cadets of the Cross' who are now watching us—for they guard you as a valuable prisoner of war—are out on the face of the Causses to support the regular soldiers sent by my husband to meet me. It is in order that I might carry to de Montrevel what I know, that I am here. Do you not see? Wherefore else should a woman like me remain alone in a petty village, listening to psalms chanted night and morn like the howling of dogs with their noses pointed at the moon, and prophets prophesying like old spae-wives afraid of the Last Judgment. What but my wifely duty would have kept me there?"

Flower-o'-the-Corn was looking at her with great wide-open eyes. Blue eyes open wider and show more surprise than any others.

"But he was kissing you," she objected, "and—and—you were letting him!"

"You dear little simpleton," laughed Yvette, "why, that is nothing! I will tell de Montrevel of it to-night, and he will laugh heartily to himself. It is only part of the rules of the game——"

"Then I do not think it at all a nice game," said

Flower-o'-the-Corn. "If you did really love him, of course, that might make a difference."

"Of course you think so, dear innocent," said Yvette, gaily, "but women of the world have other standards. And now—well, we have wasted time enough on this matter. It is folly, anyway. All kissing is, unless you gain something by it! The main thing is that you are a prisoner of war, and that your father will have to pay three or four thousand pounds for his daughter's liberation, or——"

"Or what?" cried Frances, with her blue eyes yet wider open. "My poor old father never had three thousand pence to bless himself with—what is the other alternative?"

"Well," said Yvette, slowly, "you are a young girl and I am a married woman, but to be honest with you I cannot put the alternative into words. Unless you have heard in the village of La Cavalerie what these Cadets of the Cross are in the habit of doing to Protestant maidens who fall in their way, I cannot bring myself to tell you!"

"I—have—heard!" said Frances, slowly, the blood rushing to her cheeks and then slowly fading away.

"Well," said Yvette, taking her advantage, "these men will do you all you have heard and worse—things inconceivable—not to be spoken of. For these are no regular soldiers, but Cadets of the Cross—to-night on a foray, and to-morrow in the slums of a town or in some beggar's den. Otherwise, they would not have dared to speak to me as they did—otherwise they would not now be waiting about us like greedy wolves around the innocent lamb!"

"And what shall I do? Tell me what I must do!" moaned Frances, her head still on her hands. "I

have pistols. Shall I kill myself ? Or—or—if we wait long enough——"

She did not finish her sentence.

"If we wait long enough, what then ?" said Yvette, suddenly grown icy in her turn.

"Well, *he—he* might come to seek me !"

Yvette Foy moved a little further from her victim.

"I thought better of you than that !" she said, severely ; "*my* excuse that I did that which I did at the bidding of my husband, does not apply to him. That which he did, he did to deceive you—behind your back—out of the prompting of his own evil heart. That is, if he ever had any love for you, which he denied to me. Besides, it does not matter. It will not do for us to be found here together. If your friend were to arrive now there would be a fight. Do you think that those wolves out yonder would give up their prey without a try for it ? No, surely ! Well, they might win, or—he might win. But neither alternative would serve my purpose. I mean when my work is done down below, to go back to La Cavalerie. I mean to be nothing more than Yvette Foy, the innkeeper's daughter, till this nest of rebels against the King's authority is rooted out. Why need I conceal it ? I wish to be back again, because Jean Cavalier is there. And what is more, I want the ground clear. You have been in my way. Yes, in my way. And yet I love you, as I shall presently prove. I might have gotten all the information that I wish from—from this young aide of my Lord Marlborough's long ago—had it not been for you."

She paused to let her words sink in.

"Well, here is a way to be rid of me—once and for all," cried Flower-o'-the-Corn, fiercely and suddenly.

She pulled a pistol from her pocket and cocked it. Yvette snatched it away.

"It would serve me but little to have the guilt of innocent blood on my conscience," she said. "You forget—I am a Catholic, and must go to confession. No, no—I have thought of a way. We will cheat them all yet!"

CHAPTER XXII.

The Cradle of Saint Veran.

"Madame la Maréchale! Madame la Maréchale!" cried a voice from over the desolate fangs of the Causses, crumbling with frost, and weirdly blanched in the starlight.

"Aye, Joseph, what is it?" she replied, in quite another voice than she had been using to Frances.

"We must be going to our homes before daybreak. It comes in an hour or so, and we want our prisoner. Our night will be wholly blank without. We know her for a Protestant and the daughter of a preacher. We will have her served as such!"

"Besides which," chimbed in another voice, "Cornely here wants his horse-blanket."

There was the noise of a scuffle at that, under cover of which Yvette stood up on the ridge, so near that she could talk freely to the men.

"If it is a matter of ransom," she said, kindly, "I take it on myself that the Maréchal de Montrevel will pay any reasonable sum! I myself——"

"It is not a matter of ransom, Madame," answered the man who had been called Joseph, fiercely: "we have taken it on us to humble these dogs and sons of dogs, these Huguenot *barbets!* Have we not permission to use the Torture—aye, authority from

the King himself, passing over him whom you are pleased to call your husband."

"Cadets of the Cross," cried Yvette, in a loud voice, "once and for all I warn you! You may call yourselves soldiers, and it please you. But by the faith of a woman, if my husband——"

"*Her husband*," laughed Joseph, contemptuously; "she, a Protestant, can be no man's honest wife, least of all that of a Marshal of the good Catholic King of France, from whom we hold our orders. Praise be to the holy pyx, we are not dependent on Monsieur the Marshal de Montrevel—no, nor on any of his——"

"Hush there!" interrupted another voice—Cornely's probably.

"Well, at any rate," continued Joseph, "his ladies of the Protestant connection—be done with your talks and plottings! Madame la Maréchale we will not touch. She has been made sacred by the baton of a Marshal. But mark me well, as sure as my name is Joseph Peyrat, we will come for our prisoner in five minutes. And then willy-nilly, Madame la Batonnière, we Cadets of the Cross will put your friend to the high, the low, and the middle question. And so it may fall out to all pretty wenches of the Barbet persuasion!"

"Yes, yes," chimed in some of the others; "do we not wear the white band in double across our breasts in token that we are of the King's party—the alliance of true believers? We Cadets of the Cross will make another day of Holy Saint Bartholomew, eh, lads? And as for the Maréchal de Montrevel, he who wears no scarf and makes war with gloves of kid, who knows on which side he is?"

Already there was a glimmer of red in the east away over the dark mural escarpment of the Causse Noir.

It might have been only the complement of the flaming green sword of the aurora that smote and wavered incessantly overhead. But the waning of the night warned the two women that the time was short, even though they could not yet see each other's features.

"I have it," said Yvette; "wait, I will baulk them yet. Cadets of the Cross, are they? They will make a new Saint Bartholomew's Day, will they? Well, well, an' it please them, they will have a well-known victim to try their blades upon. Let us see if they will dare to kill ME!"

The two girls had been standing all the while almost under the shadow of the huge mast which had been erected as a support for the carrier-cradle to convey messages and packages to Saint Veran on the opposite verge of the valley of the Dourbie. Thick cables stretched away downwards in the darkness in a grand curve. There was a little drag rope underneath, which served the twofold office of summoning the watcher opposite and of fastening the parcel in the travelling-cradle.

"Here we have it," said Yvette, "this will suit all purposes. You can await your father's return just as well at Saint Veran, which is a Camisard town, and would give its last Genevan psalter for a real pastor's daughter. You will be out of my way there. There is some risk, of course. But you have heard very plainly that I shall not be able to save you here. I pray you get into the cradle. By the Lord—I mean by the Holy Virgin of St. Enemie, I would that I had your chances. If I could save you otherways, I declare I would try this road to heaven myself. It is as near as Yvette Foy is ever likely to find herself! Get in, Frances."

The girl, now thoroughly frightened, clung about Yvette Foy's neck.

"No, no," she said, "I do not deserve your love. Get into the cradle and let me swing you off."

"Oh, I love you," cried Flower-o'-the-Corn; "at least, I am sorry I ever hated you. You are giving your life for mine—or the same thing."

"Nonsense, nonsense, child," said Yvette, in a loud harsh voice, "do as I bid you. Are you ready? There!"

She gave a couple of sharp tugs to the rope, which were immediately answered from the other side of the ravine, and then rapidly looped the cord about Flower-o'-the-Corn's body.

"Now it will not trail. Kiss me!" she said, as the wicker-basket began to move, cumbrously at first, and then slid with increasing smoothness down the great slope.

The morning was fairly dawning now, but slowly. The green of the Aurora had, as usual, blown up into a wind laden with heavy purplish clouds, so that as Yvette kissed Flower-o'-the-Corn she felt, though she could not see, the tears upon the grateful girl's face.

Yvette stood a moment watching the long sway and sag of the cradle till she lost sight of it against the great marled escarpment of the Causse Noir on which stands the little town of Saint Veran, to which, by the most wondrous carriage then extant in the world, Flower-o'-the-Corn was being swiftly borne.

The Cadets of the Cross were all gazing with such intentness at the place where their prisoner was talking to Madame la Maréchale, that the swaying basket of wicker-work with its trail rope looped two or three times about it, passed completely over their heads before it was noticed

It was Joseph Peyrat who first caught sight of it.

"Fire, there—fire! Throw a hand-grenade! Run back and cut the ropes!" he shouted. "Do you not see they are sending away some valuable plunder? Did I not tell you both of them were barbets—Protestants—no true Christians? That Maréchale woman is trying to jew us out of our honest dues. All the best of the plunder will, in a hen-setting of moments, be safe in their accursed Saint Veran! But you—you would not take my advice, and you see where you have landed yourselves!"

The Cadets of the Cross (as the irregular infantry on the Catholic side was called) wore as their badge a crossed band of white linen upon their breasts, and their deeds were those of savages. Rather, as even their own chroniclers report, it would seem as if no savages with tomahawk and scalping knife ever equalled the atrocities which these fiends rejoiced to commit in the name of religion and under the sanction of the highest powers of Church and State.

But there was by the nature of the bond—which was solely one of plunder and revenge—little discipline among them. So that, though Joseph by dint of a superiority in cruelty, had assumed a certain command among them, there were others, as Cornely, who were of almost equal standing. At all events no volley was fired at Flower-o'-the-Corn's cradle as she swung out across the deep gulf towards the town of St. Veran, a mere purple blur in the distance when she started, now growing full of windows and white walls, all crowded with watching people.

Joseph himself fired, indeed, as did several others. A hand grenade was thrown, not unskilfully, for it struck the moving basket, causing it to sway dangerously. For at that date aerial conveyances were tricksy

things, and indeed it is not recorded that they have gained very greatly in certainty since. Then it fell back to earth, with a cry of "Ware, heads!" and a general scattering this way and that, all crouching low, as hens do when the hawk hovers in the zenith.

The grenade took the ground near the feet of Joseph Peyrat, and exploded with a vast upflinging of dust and earth, some of which went into Joseph's eyes and mouth, making his language like that of a bull of excommunication done into the vernacular. Thereafter he coughed, shouted, and cried aloud that he was blinded.

He ordered someone to lead him to the mast. He declared that he would cut the ropes with his own hand. He would slay the girl. No two accursed Barbets should chouse him of his proper advantage! And as for the other girl—he cared neither for Marshal's wife nor Marshal's——"

Whereat someone bade him abruptly stow the slack of his jaw. If the ropes were to be cut, he must go and do it by himself.

"And very soon will I finish that!" he cried, striding towards the great trebly-braced mast of the Saint Veran cradle.

Beneath it stood a woman—a woman whom at first sight they did not know. She had a pistol in either hand—Flower-o'-the-Corn's pistols. She stood erect beneath the dark purple little dawn—a brunette, tall and determined, her eyes deep as the Dourbie pools at eventide, yet now gleaming bright and angry as when the sun shines on a sea fretted with the north wind.

"Approach nearer by one hairsbreadth, any one of you," she cried, "and I will show you what chance a Cadet of the Cross has of heaven! You say that

you do not fear the Maréchal—that you are not under his orders. But, thank God, there is one argument which can still avail with a Cadet of the Cross, and all such cattle—the fear of a hole punctured in his own dirty skin. Soldiers—no, such beasts as you would not be soldiers more than one day! At daybreak of the second the Provost Marshal and the limb of the nearest convenient beech would finish your service. But, come on—I have sent my friend where you will not be able to touch her. She is safe in Saint Veran by this time. And if you want either her person or her ransom—why, go there and seek it. Or apply at the camp of my husband, de Montrevel — who, in spite of all letters permissory, knows how to deal with such vile beasts of the field as you are."

After that there was a rush, Joseph Peyrat being well to the front, as it chanced on this occasion by no means to his gain.

A shot rang out. Joseph doubled himself up suddenly as if he had fallen over upon his own folded arms. Yvette stood erect, a little ring of smoke disengaging itself from her pistol.

"Ah, here they come—the Maison Rouge! The uniform of the King's guards! Better leave the wench alone!"

Other guns went off irregularly. An officer ran up in the fine uniform of the Maison du Roi, the Red House of the King.

"*À moi*—France! France!" cried Madame la Maréchale, at the pitch of her voice.

The Cadets of the Cross took to their heels in the brightening dawn. They had no wish, in the present mood of Madame the Maréchale de Montrevel to test the carpenter work of the King's gibbets, or even of the nearest beech-trees. So they made speed, and were

out of sight in a few minutes. All save Joseph, that is, who would never return an insolent answer to maid or matron again. He lay on his face, his mouth filled with the hard earth of the Causse, his white-banded bonnet fallen off, and the bald pate of him lying against the great mast of the travelling cradle which had conveyed Flower-o'-the-Corn safely across to St. Veran.

"What is this? What is this? Speak—speak, Mistress Foy?" cried Maurice and Catinat together.

The cloak of fur fell to the girl's feet. It lay about her unregarded as she stood a moment silent. But not a quiver of the countenance discovered to the men that Yvette had expected any other succours across the waste than those which had arrived so opportunely.

"It was nothing," she said, and her voice was clear and steady, "only I found the Cadets of the Cross threatening with ill-usage Mistress Frances Wellwood, and I have sent her over the way to Saint Veran! It was nothing to do!"

"It is the act of a heroine!" said Maurice, profoundly moved.

"It is worthy of a Jael!" said Catinat. "Well may we sing the song of Deborah, she who in an hour became immortal as a worthy mother in Israel!"

Then Catinat took both hands of the girl, the rich mantle lying all unheeded at her feet.

"For this also I ask your pardon," he said, solemnly; "I took you for one of the foolish ones, the lookers-out of windows upon passers-by, devisers of cunning needlework of various colours—nay, even as the liers-in-wait for the unwary. But now I see you are even as Jael—as Abigail who saved her lord—even as Anna the prophetess—as the great women of the earth. I, Catinat the prophet, crave your pardon!"

And raising her hand very reverently he kissed it.

Then Maurice Raith, stricken to the heart for the anger that had been in him, and the injustice of his thoughts, did likewise. And both of them took this Yvette Foy for a woman most wonderful.

Yet neither of them knew how wonderful. For it is not given to many to call upon a husband and find a discarded lover, in raiment which she herself had provided. In a single moment Yvette Foy had laid aside her degree, had changed sides for the second time, had become again the simple daughter of Martin Foy, of the Bon Chrétien. Yet not so much as a tinge of regret crossed her countenance. She stood before these men even as a modest maiden might do, confused by the hearing of her own praises. She did not blush. *That* she could not compass, but she looked from side to side as if they did her too much honour, and, as if to change the subject, she touched the red uniform of Maurice with her forefinger.

"Whence came this pretty thing?" she cried, archly, like a child that finds a toy. "Well, I suppose it does not become me to ask, for it has served our purpose so excellently this time!"

"Indeed," said Maurice, looking at himself in astonishment in the morning light after the excitement of the stalk and chase had ended; "indeed, I know as little as yourself whence it comes, or how I came to have it upon me!"

Yvette smiled subtly.

"Or less," she murmured, unheard of the young man. Then she added in a louder tone, "Methinks the place is even yet unsafe; let us go home!"

And they walked back together, but La Cavalerie was not the home in which Yvette had meant to take her rest that night, nor they the courtiers who were

to do her homage. Nevertheless, like a child that will sleep anywhere, she accepted Catinat and Maurice, since no better might be, even complimenting the latter on his uniform and how well he looked in it.

"It becomes you better than anything I ever saw you wear," she said. Then the moment after she added, "And I think *she* would like it, too!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

Apples of Gold in Baskets of Silver.

Let it be set down as not the least of the virtues of this remarkable girl that she recognised in a moment when her immediate plans had been defeated, and without a murmur took up her old life again, with all that the sacrifice meant to her.

Perhaps she was somewhat assisted in this by the thought that Flower-o'-the-Corn was safe on the other side of the great gulf of air which men call the Valley of the Dourbie. All the same it was no mean or small thing she had done, when she had stood it out alone and backed down all opposition till her dear friend (or dearer enemy) was safely taken out of the cradle on the other side. She knew when that happened by the twitching of the ropes above her head and the quivering of the stays which extended every way about the mast.

On the way home she warned Maurice and Catinat that the Cadets of the Cross now knew of the Camisard means of communication with Saint Veran, and that if they wished to keep it in working order they had better put a sufficient guard over it. She also informed them that Flower-o'-the-Corn seemed glad to be gone, a fact in no wise surprising considering the threats of the sieurs Joseph Peyrat and his complices.

"Wait till I lay hands on any of them. They call

themselves Cadets of the Cross," growled Catinat, grimly, "I, Abdias Maurel, will for the first time reveal to them for what purpose a cross is constructed."

As Yvette had foretold, the townsfolk of Saint Veran, Camisards to the core, and hotly in earnest about the matter, received Flower-o'-the-Corn with open arms. No one could do enough for her. The maidens ran for their mothers—their mothers for cordials and bade blankets be heated before the fires. There were feuds as to who should entertain her, only decided by the attitude of the entire young male population of Saint Veran, which persisted in hanging over her couch like devotees before a shrine, and vouching unanimously for the willingness of their parents to receive her. So these wise people finally decided that Flower-o'-the-Corn should await the coming of her father (of whose sermons they had heard the fame) in the house of a certain childless couple, Saint Ruth by name. The husband had been formerly mayor of the little hill town, and he and his wife were exceeding willing to have the daughter of the famous pastor of Geneva as their guest.

Here, then, we may leave Frances Wel wood safely and restfully happed in the kindliness of these good people. To the great Causse de Larzac we return, from whose verge Saint Veran is only a picturesque purple outline and a wreath of blowing wood smoke.

Yvette was once more within the auberge of the Bon Chrétien, the fur robes done away in silver paper, while the other two (being men and having other matters more important to think about) never so much as wondered where they came from. Such is the man Adam. Even outside Eden it is questionable if he would have observed Eve's changes of costume, even though (doubt it not) the lady had a fresh one every day.

At La Cavalerie the old routine recommenced. The guards were shifted duly. The trenches were dug farther afield. Sadly Maurice went about his duty, casting many a glance across the deep gorge of the Dourbie —now all blue and rose with the exhalations of the evening, again like a floor white and solid as though one could walk across it, when the cumuli piled themselves under the round of the moon—at all times a great gulf fixed which the young man desired to pass over and was not able

Each night he walked to the great post from which ran the ropes of the cradle of Saint Veran. And each time he had a new proof of the power of the wife of a Maréchal of France ; that is, had he but known it. For the post remained unhewn, the ropes uncut, and the cradle, returned by unseen hands from the heights of Saint Veran, swayed emptily in the breezes of the Causses, as if it had never conveyed across the trench of the Dourbie so fair and precious a burden as Mistress Frances, called Flower-o'-the-Corn.

As for Yvette Foy, her attitude towards Maurice was quite changed. A kind of tender reproach, as if deeds ought to speak louder for her than any words, characterised her bearing—no more small sisterly cares or frequency of interviews, but rather a quiet regretful distance, absolute and elaborate as the gulf of Saint Veran, guarded her about. In the air, as it were, for ever hovered the echoes of the harsh words spoken on the eve of Flower-o'-the-Corn's flight. They made a kind of martyr halo about her head.

Patient, maidenly, unrevengeful, the spirit of Yvette Foy seemed to etherealise her lovely body, and her very silence concerning the act she had done in saving Frances Wellwood and facing the worst that the cruel Cadets of the Cross could do to her, added to that in-

comparable nobility of self-sacrifice the one touch of the unexpected which it lacked.

Not that Yvette Foy made any claims! She only abased her great eyes and besought others to pass from the subject.

And then, after all, in its essence it was a fine thing she had done, so that she had every right to speak or to be silent as it pleased her.

But as to the reason which had led her out upon the Causses that night, Yvette Foy was silent with a silence invincible and complete.

To be quite plain, a noble combination had been spoilt, and the Maréchal de Montrevel and his suite had roamed as much of the Causses as was safe for three or four hours in vain, seeking a certain Madame la Maréchale—who, in the simple guise of Yvette Foy, was at that moment gently and uncomplainingly returning towards La Cavalerie in time to chant the morning psalm of the Camisards.

For the elements of greatness in Yvette always told her to make the best of the things which were. So with Maurice on one side and Catinat on the other, Billy Marshall bringing up the rear, she offered a striking picture of a Puritan maiden, going meekly homeward after some deed of noble self-immolation which, like that of Miriam, the sister of Moses, would render her name famous for ever among her people.

The fur cloak over her arm did not matter. She never so much as referred to it once. A sweet and singular modesty pervaded her every action. Her whole deportment told of patience and contentment with the station in which Providence had placed her. Such was the attitude of Yvette Foy till the party which had been sent to intercept the English ships came home. Yet it is, indeed, more than likely that

had Yvette succeeded in her first mission, the embassy might never have returned at all.

But at all events, return it did, though not, in the opinion of those who took part in it, wholly successful.

The Camisards and Cavalier their chief, had expected that the allies would send something more than arms and munitions of war—though, as Maurice pointed out, not altogether with reason. They had expected troops also.

Now, no King of France could have sustained for a moment the disgrace of a body of foreign troops within his dominions—nay, in the very heart of them, assisting his own subjects to rebel. He must have given up his foreign wars, withdrawn his armies, and first bound the strong man who had found entrance into his house. This was always Maurice's view, as it had been that of his master Marlborough. But it was not that of the Camisards, who were naturally disappointed that the English ships would land no troops, nor do more than aid them to put the stores and warlike material into a place of safety, so that they could be recovered at a later period.

When Cavalier returned he found the whole town and defences of La Cavalerie in such complete and admirable order that no fault was to be found anywhere. Also many things—such as the fortifying of the communications towards the Dourbie—had been thought on and carried out for the first time. Nevertheless, not a word of praise or compliment did Cavalier utter, even withdrawing the guard about the cradle-post, the cables of which connected the Larzac with Saint Veran, with the result that it was found a morning or two afterwards wrecked and useless, the great ever booming stays cut and the whole wonderful erection lying over on its side.

Soon afterward Maurice found that there was a changed atmosphere towards him and his countryman in the village of La Cavalerie. Part of this, no doubt, existed solely in the young man's own mind. His soul was on the purple ridges of Saint Veran, his body on the rough fortifications of the Larzac.

The expedition had achieved all that he had expected of it. Everything that the Camisards had not been able to bring with them had been safely stowed away. But the fact (which was now for the first time borne in upon them) that, so far as fighting went, they must rely entirely upon themselves, appeared altogether to have changed their dispositions to strangers.

Catinat alone continued to show them friendliness. From the rough hard man of whom nothing had been expected, most was now forthcoming.

It was soon evident that Patrick Wellwood and his young countryman Maurice Raith could not long continue to reside in comfort at La Cavalerie. For one thing all communication, save that of the daily display of "All Well" flags, was cut off with Saint Veran by the destruction of the cradle on the Dourbie side.

And by this very misfortune the heart of the young man and the heart of the old grew closer to each other.

It was not long before Maurice declared himself fully to the late chaplain of Ardmillan's regiment. Indeed, that saintly man, though less observant perhaps than any human creature, and in many senses "of a wandering and dilatory eye," had more than once found reason to marvel that a mere Brabant carrier should have the air and carriage, not to mention the information and interest in serious subjects, which Maurice Raith displayed to the pastor.

But one evening the confession came naturally.

"I am Raith, of the Commander-in-Chief's staff, sir, here upon his Grace's own business," said the younger.

"And I, by the act of an overruling Providence, am Patrick Wellwood, sometime chaplain to Ardmillan's regiment," responded the other.

"I knew you from the moment I set eyes upon you," said Maurice, with a glow of boyish triumph. "You see, you never attempted any disguise. And then—your daughter!"

"What of my daughter, sir?" said the old man, with the first touch of chill in his tone.

"Well," explained Maurice, boldly, "you could not expect to hide her light under a bushel, even in La Cavalerie. There is no one so beautiful as she is!"

The old pastor looked straight at the man before him. His "wandering eye" was steady enough now.

"May I inquire of you if you have conveyed any of these fancies to my daughter herself?" he said.

Maurice smiled, the clear-hearted glad smile of the man ready to count all well lost for love.

"Frankly, she would not let me," he said, "otherwise the information has been at the disposition of the lady any time these many weeks."

The old man sighed and rested his hand upon his brow.

"Frances has been to me truly as an apple of gold in a basket of silver," he murmured. "True is it, she hath not to the full her mother's beauty."

Maurice gave vent to a sudden involuntary cry. Patrick Wellwood smiled a little compassionately.

"No," he said, "even though, save one, these eyes of mine have never seen aught like her. Yet her mother was a fairer—yea, fair as Eve, the wife of Adam in Paradise, ere the coming of the Evil One."

He paused an instant, as if contemplating in the firelight, sweet, dim, far-off happinesses.

"Ah," he said, softly, so softly as almost to be inaudible "there was no one like her. Yet she chose me—me, from among them all!"

So thus naturally things cleared themselves between the two men, and after this both were gladder for the presence of the other. The minister himself was of good family in his own and, though like many another, sore reduced with the troubles o' Covenant times.

So his Frances, his "apple of gold in the basket of silver," was, in his opinion, good enough for any Raith in all the land, and his office of minister of the Gospel of equal rank with that of a Commander-in-Chief.

So it is small wonder that the two men stood a moment that night holding each other's hand ere they parted.

"Good night to you, sir," said Maurice, simply, speaking through the grip of his hand more than through his words.

"The Lord that is on high bless you—*both!*" replied the minister, adding the last word after a solemn pause, and with the jolt which a wheel makes over an obstacle.

So far good, but Maurice Raith had yet to make his peace with Flower-o'-the-Corn.

CHAPTER XXIV.

The Sweetness of Stolen Waters.

The situation in the High Cevennes could not, however, long continue. The Maréchal de Montrevel was considered by the Court not to have made the best of his opportunities, nor to have pressed upon the folk of the Camisards with enough hardness and determination. Some of his enemies were base enough to suggest a private and domestic cause for this. There was even some outcry in Court circles that he should be replaced by Marshal Villars or the young Duke of Berwick.

And, meantime, in the town of La Cavalerie the position of the emissaries of the allies was rendered far from comfortable. It was evident that the immediate pressure of the French attack would come upon La Cavalerie and not on Saint Veran or the towns and villages farther to the south, because La Cavalerie was universally looked upon as the fortress and ultimate shelter of the rebels.

Therefore as soon as possible Maurice Raith and Patrick Wellwood decided to pass across the one place to the other.

It did not appear a difficult undertaking, seeing that Flower-o'-the-Corn had so quickly accomplished the transit. But, really, with the deep defile of the Dourbie to transact, and the constant passage of the

military, one way and the other along it, the crossing was now noways easy.

It seemed, in addition, that during these latter days since the return from the sea, Jean Cavalier had changed to them. His once frank countenance had clouded over, and instead of dropping in every evening to talk over the chances of the defence and the affairs of the day with Patrick and Maurice, he avoided them both, as though he had done them some grievous wrong,—or, more exactly, as if he owed them money.

But really there was a very plain and obvious reason for this alteration in the conduct of the Camisard leader—one, too, which Maurice at least ought to have been able thoroughly to understand and appreciate. Jean Cavalier was daily spending more and more time in the enthralling company of Mistress Yvette Foy.

And if so it should prove that the lady's claims to the title of Madame la Maréchale de Montrevel were good, the fact certainly did not interfere with the charm which she had been accustomed to exercise as the unwedded and unappropriated Mademoiselle Yvette, the daughter of Martin Foy.

It may be worth while being present at one of these interviews, when it will at once be obvious that, however lightly the lady's marital engagements sat upon her, she was at least wholly loyal to the political commission which had been given her by the Maréchal de Montrevel.

For an hour or more curtains of red baize had been drawn across the high small-paned windows of the living-room and parlour of the Bon Chrétien. The wood fire burnt cheerfully, even gleefully — the small branches crackling far up the wide chimney. The

blocks of olive roots, dense and compact of fibre, caught the flame more slowly. Indeed, just as they had grown deep in the soil and (as it were) imbibed the sand because there was no water to drink, so now they spat out sparks with a certain spitefulness and impish ferocity as if the grains were veritable bullets.

At times it amounted almost to a pyrotechnic exhibition, so that Mistress Foy's black cat Mauricette was driven back with arched back and volleys of of angry counter-spitting.

There was a lamp upon a little table at Yvette Foy's right hand, so disposed that it threw the proper amount of illumination upon the clear curves of her beautiful face, upon the full red lips, yet left in a becoming shadow the great eyes with their wealthy plenitude of lashes.

Her father read steadily through a volume of Calvin's Institutes translated into French out of the Latin and published at Geneva. But, since the lamp was not at all arranged for his benefit, he had to be dependent largely upon the small clear-burning plane branches and the pyrotechnic olive-wood upon the fire for light wherewith to make out the printed pages.

But a few words at a time served him. John Calvin is not at any time, nor by any cataloguer, to be classed as a purveyor of light literature. And so Martin Foy, reading slowly and meditating deeply upon his author, remained all unconscious of the occasional penetrating gaze of his daughter, who sat at her needlework with an expression of sweet and resigned placidity upon her face, which accorded ill with the occasional flashing of her eyes as they rested not a little scornfully upon her father, turning with painful conscience page after page of Calvin upon "Salvation by Works."

In brief, Mistress Foy wanted her father to go out.

It was within a few minutes of the time at which the young chief of the Camisards was accustomed to achieve his evening visitation of the Bon Chrétien, and—the young woman wanted the room to herself.

Which is the same thing as to say that she would have it, as indeed the event soon proved.

"Father," she said, suddenly, "I do not think that it is good for you to read by this imperfect light. It would hurt younger eyes than yours. And, besides, was not this the night that the Scottish gipsy proposed to remove the horses of his master? For my part I have yet to see the Egyptian who is to be trusted with a horse. As well turn a fox loose in the poultry-yard. Would it not be as well to go down and see to it that he leaves all right in the stable?"

Martin Foy raised himself up with a sigh. He had become absorbed in a remarkable page of the Institutes, indurated and compacted like the olive roots by whose light he was reading, and like them, too, capable of throwing off a perfect volcano of sparks when set alight in any theological assembly in the world.

The interaction of free grace and human endeavour needs some thought even when expounded in half a page of Jean Cauvin, and Martin Foy and his daughter (had they but known it) were in perfect unanimity as to the danger and folly of good works and general benevolence.

Most meekly, therefore, Martin Foy went down the stone stairs of the Bon Chrétien, and Yvette was left alone. The great wide-stomached clock, with its dragons, its gilt dolls, and impossible hunchbacked caravels, all sailing comfortably away together to the shores of nothing, went on ticking no faster and no slower. Whether the heart of Yvette Foy did the same, who shall tell?

Certain it is that she continued her needlework like any douce and thrifty housemaiden, till the last echoes of her father's cough and the final clack of his wooden shoon had died down the stairs.

Then she sprang up with the swift noiselessness of a wild animal—the young of the leopard, say, or the domestic cat—which, being "shooed" to the door, stops to lick herself on the way, with an action that touches at once the heights of gracefulness and the basement of contempt.

But Yvette was not by any means on her way to the door. Yet it was with an altogether feline swiftness that she crossed the room, carrying the lighted lamp in her hand, and placing it upon a little Venetian mirror, which was closed during the day by double leaves of light-toned wood.

Then with fingers which moved so rapidly that they could scarcely be followed, Yvette Foy began to arrange her toilette. The great black coils of her hair became like living things, winding and wimpling about her hands and arms as if she had been some oriental snake-charmer. They fell back into massive waves. They writhed in sweeping undulations. They gathered themselves up into crisp and tiny ringlets about her white forehead

And as she proceeded a faint and curious smile broke slowly over her face, that sweet wilful willingness which comes to some women only when they know that they are beautiful, or when, like Mistress Foy's Mauricette, they move under the caressing hand. Yvette only smiled. A lover of animals would have expected her to purr.

Then she took a puff and a powder-shell out of a drawer and touched her cheeks carefully avoiding her lips, which, being sufficiently scarlet of themselves,

needed no attention. And even as she continued to look the smile became more than a comfortable acquiescence in the scheme of things. Something of conscious power leaped into it. She seemed to be listening to the words of a lover and finding pleasure in them. Yet it was only that she loved herself above any living thing—yes, and thought herself more beautiful.

There came a light foot on the stair, the quick confident spring of youth, which can take three steps as quickly as one and one as lightly as three. Yvette Foy carried the lamp swiftly across the room to the little table. She set it down with care in its original place, and having picked up her embroidery, she arranged herself in a moment so that the light fell upon her just as it should—her profile clear as that of a sculptured goddess upon an altar fresco, her ivory neck merged into a breathing bosom and a gold-and-white bodice which moved with a gracious rhythm. The plainness of her home-dress was lost in the deep shadow. It might have been the *peignoir* of a princess or the single gown of King Cophetua's beggar maid before her perilous elevation. It signified little now to Jean Cavalier what she wore. It was not a gown he had come out to see, but rather that beautiful face, those splendid eyes with the sweet lingering invitation in them, the droop and lift of her curled lashes, the pout of the proud mouth which yet (he knew) by-and-by would not be proud with him—these and such-like she, Yvette Foy, had resolved to make dearer to this young man than his cause, his religion, his soldiership, and his God.

The knuckles of a hand—of a well-accustomed hand—fell upon the outer oak of the parlour door. The knock was at once light and confident, its new levity at once engaging and also significant of many things.

The smile on Yvette Foy's lips seemed to spread upwards to the dimples on her cheeks. Her eyes glowed. For, indeed, to do her justice, there was nothing cold or impersonal about the lady's conquestings. Yvette met each one, as it were new and virginal. All was as if for the first time, her own feelings, her reluctance, her shy yieldings or her prolonged resistances; in fact, the whole plan of campaign.

So on this occasion, "Come in!" she said, softly and innocently.

Jean Cavalier entered quickly and closed the door behind him, as it seemed with one sole movement. He had learned something since last we saw him. They were usually good scholars, those whom Mistress Foy tutored, and learned their lesson swiftly.

"Yvette, dearest!" he said, eagerly, and stood a moment in the doorway, struck still and motionless by the beauty of the vision which met his eyes. Then he approached with quick steps and knelt beside her. The girl let her work drop into her lap with a sigh of contentment. The bliss of her smile seemed to breathe out with a conscious glow from all her body. She turned her face towards the young man, a tender light upon it.

"No, do not," she said, softly, lifting up the fingers of one hand with ever so slight an action of defence, "do not. You must not! You know you should not come in upon me suddenly like that—frighting me."

"I know. I know," he exclaimed, penitently, "only Yvette, remember that I love you—you are all I have."

"So you say," she murmured, reverting to her seam with the most maidenly delicacy, the smile no more than a fluttering graciousness now, "but you should remember who you are—and—and—that the character

of a poor girl like Yvette Foy is easily compromised when great captains come too often to visit them ! "

He smiled easily, with the pleasure of a man who is touched on the spot where his soul lives.

Vanity was the frayed cord, the joint in the armour, the loose link in the chain—anything which might describe the danger and weakness of Jean Cavalier's nature.

In excuse be it said that, as yet, he had scarcely touched the age of twenty-one years, and that Yvette Foy had in her time played on the vanities of far older and wiser men, as an artist upon an instrument of strings.

At all events, now Jean Cavalier was as wax in her hands. But as she had promised, she did her spiriting with the daintiest hand—so delicate, indeed, that even the young man did not know it. He entered the room all unconscious that the final attack upon his loyalty to his co-religionists was to be made that night.

He came in flushed with the triumph of good news.

" At last," he said, " you and I have La Cavalerie to ourselves. I saw them off safely across the Dourbie an hour ago ! "

Yvette put out her hands swiftly till they touched the young man's shoulders, and then suddenly dropped them as though a new thought had struck her.

" I would that I had known ! " she said. Though why, did not quite appear.

" Perchance after all you wished to say good-bye to the young officer of my Lord Marlborough ? " said Cavalier, jealously

" Jester ! " cried Yvette, as if astonished: and then, when he had repeated his words, she patted him on the cheek and called him a sulky boy.

Then she rose up quickly, with the same action as

she had used when she went to the mirror, letting the embroidery fall neglected on the floor and leaving the young man kneeling before the empty chair. Jean Cavalier, taking comfort more from her actions than from her words, gathered up the white fabric, the silken skeins, the braid of gold and colours, and laid all upon the table, as if that had been the purpose for which he knelt down.

Then he rose and stood with his elbow on the mantelpiece intently watching her. She paced restlessly up and down, evidently deep in thought.

"Yvette," he said, at last, "is your trouble anything in which I can assist you?"

She stopped, looked at him with her great dark eyes for a long moment as if drinking him in. Then abruptly she resumed her walk to and fro on the floor of the par our.

For a while she did not answer h m. More than once she seemed about to speak, but instead let her words die unuttered on her tongue, and dropped her eyes. The youth was greatly disappointed. She appeared to think him too young to be of any assistance in her trouble. At least, that was how he interpreted her actions.

"These Camisard folk do not think so," he said, without prelude, "*they* obey me. That which I order they will do!"

"That which your familiar Spirit reveals to you," said Yvette, with a mischievous g ance.

Cavalier blushed deeply.

"Nevertheless, the thing is true," he said, quickly. "I did feel it here—speaking within me, both at Geneva and afterwards here. As I love you, it is true. But of late the Spirit hath departed from me. It speaks no more in my heart."

"Frighted, I suppose, by the first counsels of common-sense," said Yvette, smiling. "Ah, Jean, Jean,

if only you had permitted me to be frank with you earlier, we should have been spared this folly ! "

The young man stood gazing at the girl, his eyes wide and troubled, his nether lip quivering.

" Do you know," he began suddenly, and then as quickly stopped as if her radiant beauty had begun to affect him personally, as heat might or extreme cold. So the regard of Yvette Foy's eyes, lingering, delicious, personal to himself alone, drew the soul from him and left him speechless and estranged from his own past.

" Do I know what ? " said the girl, seating herself and drawing up one knee between her joined hands. That also she had practised beneath the lamp—nevertheless it looked now the most innocent and spontaneous thing in life—as Yvette did it and as Jean Cavalier saw it. Yet the Camisard leader was no fool, at least not more so than the rest of the world at one-and-twenty—nay, and even a few years older.

" That you have never kissed me to-night ! " he said, taking his fate in his hands.

The girl drew in her breath sharply. Her cheeks flushed definitely and seriously this time, not with shame, not with maiden modesty, but with triumph. She knew now that the game was in her hands.

" This Camisard business," she thought to herself, " will flutter out and die away like a fire lacking fuel—without him, that is. *And he is mine !* "

But aloud she said, " General Cavalier, I am surprised. Either you are of opinion that you can safely insult a poor girl, or you do not know what you say ! "

" Neither," he said, brusquely, " neither, as God sees me ! Yvette, Yvette, you know that I love you. You know it. I have told you so a thousand times. I have given you a hundred proofs of it ! "

She laughed scornfully.

"Ah," she said, "but not the one proof which alone I ask for. The proof that would in a week undo all this mischief, and bring back peace and quiet to these distracted provinces!"

"The faith—the faith!" said Cavalier, as if desperately reminding himself of something he could not forget. "I could not break my word!"

"Very well, then," said Yvette Foy, "you have refused the only thing I have ever asked of you. What need to tell me of a thousand proofs of love when you refuse even one! I bid you good night!"

"Ah," said Jean Cavalier, turning distractedly away, and gripping at the table, "you know not what you ask!"

But there he was wrong, for Yvette Foy knew very well, and what is more—she meant to have it.

To let him think out his thought and feel the pain bite in, she turned and played with the lamp. She made some pretence as that a tortoiseshell pin had dropped from her hair, and bent to look for it upon the ground.

In an instant Jean Cavalier was once more on his knees again in front of her.

Smilingly she laid her hand upon the young man's chin as he had been a child. It was, almost superfluously, clean-shaven. She turned his face up to hers.

"Jean," she said, "Jean Cavalier," and her voice took on the soft throaty contralto cooing of a dove to its mate, "well do you know that even if I love you I may not say so. But do this for me—meet the Maréchal at Nismes, or where you will. You will receive a commission in the King's army, I promise you that—or, if you will, you may return. These men will follow you anywhere. The King will grant them his pardon,

and guarantee the free exercise of their religion. Do this and—I will do for you the thing you ask of me."

"Do it now," he pleaded, his face eager as a boy's in the grip of his first love. (Ah, if the woman had been but worthy !)

At this Yvette smiled her witching smile, and broke into a trill of merriest laughter.

"Ah," she said, "you are young indeed ! Do you not know that a favour is only worth asking till it is granted ? At least, men think so—even the best of them, even the wisest of them. That is why one who loves, one who loves to be loved, has sometimes to deny what she would give—to set herself about with thorns when her heart is full of flowers ! "

"But so it is not with Jean Cavalier ! " he cried, his hands clasped before him as when he was used to invoke the Spirit—that is before grace had wholly departed from him.

And he spoke truth, though it did not suit Yvette Foy's present purpose to believe it.

"Come—tell me that you will," she said, swaying him with her eyes, which never left his face ; "to-night you must answer me. Not for long can I avert the storm that is about to break—the anger of the King. Were it not for my friend Eugenie la Gracieuse, I could not have done it so long. But now the horsemen have set themselves in array at the gate, while we on the mountains (as well you know) are but as men that walk naked and bare foot among the thorns."

"The Lord is with us ! " answered Jean Cavalier, but not confidently.

"Are you sure—are you sure ? " said Yvette, in a low thrilling whisper. "Is He still with you ? "

The face of the young man was suddenly contorted as with the spasm of a great agony. Sobs mightier

than the weeping of women over the slain shook him from head to foot. Yvette approached her lamplit face closer to his, all flashing with ravishment and witchery and the joy of life. She took him with the attraction of a doubtful denial, the strongest weapon of such a woman. The perfumed braids of her hair breaking loose, crisped in rings and tendrils about her neck.

The young man's head fell forward.

"Ah!" he cried, with a sudden fierceness, "you are to me as the fair women of Moab—even as she who was slain in Baal-peor by the javelin of Phineas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, the high priest! Yet I love thee, Yvette! Heaven be my help, I cannot choose but love thee! *And my punishment is that the Lord hath departed from me!*"

Then Yvette Foy bent and resigned her lips, which were scarlet as the flowers of sin, crimson as sunset red, sweet as stolen waters, upon the lips of the young prophet of the Cevennes.

"You have promised," she said; "you will come with me to the Marshal and make the peace of this poor folk with the King!"

"Kiss me once again like that and I will come—yea, though hell open for me her gates!" cried Jean Cavalier.

And for the second time Yvette Foy kissed him. For the woman was fair under the lamplight and pleasant to the eyes, even as Eve in the garden when Adam first looked upon her and said, "This is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh!"

Yet within Jean Cavalier the heart was heavy as the burden of the desert of the sea, when the whirlwinds from the south pass through from the desert, from a land great and terrible, where no God is nor any man had come.

CHAPTER XXV.

A Springe to Catch Woodcocks.

It was a true word Yvette Foy had spoken when she said that she had a definite offer to make to Jean Cavalier. She, and she alone, had discerned that this youth was the crux of the revolt. She had persuaded the great general, the Marquis de Montrevel, Marshal of France, that if the young Camisard could but be brought over to the side of the King, the revolt in the Cevennes, which had flamed and flickered on for so many years, would be finished once and for all.

And since Yvette never did anything for nothing, as a price for carrying out this successfully, the Marquis had promised that she should be publicly acknowledged as his wife.

This was a matter of great moment to Yvette Foy, who, more than godliness and an entrance to heaven, desired to be recognised as the wife of a Marshal of the realm. She was beyond doubt a woman excellently fair, and in all that concerned her own future of an extraordinary discretion.

"I will bring Cavalier to your feet," she had affirmed more than once; "he will accept a commission under the King and raise a regiment—aye, two or three if necessary—only in that case his rank will need to tbe he higher. The Camisards follow him like sheep. But for this you on your part will

acknowledge our marriage and present me at the Court of Versailles!'

The Maréchal had laughed at this, but with Yvette's arms about his neck he could do little else but promise.

"That you may have others of higher estate upon whom to try your charms than a mere leader of Camisard rebels, my pretty Yvette," he said, tolerantly touching her cheek with his lips.

The Maréchal de Montrevel, to whom Yvette Foy had for some time been privately married, was a gentleman of an ancient family of the country of Bresse. He had survived a long career of gallantry, both in the wars and also in those other fields with which the word is more usually connected. He had early attained high honours in the campaigns of the King. He was a famous and successful duellist. If there was anywhere a forlorn hope to be led, Nicholas de la Baume was the man to lead it.

He was now in his six-and-fiftieth year, but not a single grey thread crossed the rippled flax of his hair, which he wore long and tied in a queue. He adhered to military moustachios in an age of clean-shaven men, and had conserved his powers by judicious exercises, military and other

A certain suave and kindly humour, mellow as his laugh, and more than occasionally quickened with his native Burgundy, kept the man's spirit heartsome and sound as a nut. He had frankly fallen in love with Yvette Foy, when the army was settled at Millau, before her father's removal to La Cavalerie, and it was by his advice that the greater part of Martin Foy's forfeited property had been settled upon his daughter. Not that this had any considerable weight with de Montrevel. At home he passed for a poor man. He had been a poor soldier all his life, and he expected

to die with the sharp chill of a bayonet through his breast.

Still this girl had taken him, as he had never in his life been made captive of women. First, he had begun by making love in dilettante fashion to Yvette Foy. He ended (like many another) in finding himself in love with her. With the inevitableness of a woman's instinct she knew the feeling that was in him, and, as her manner was, received his advances coldly, while all the time her great black eyes burned with an inner light, and the lashes lifted and fell ominously.

"Monsieur the General did her great honour (de Montrevel had not yet received his marshal's baton, which came to him later in the same year). For herself she was but a poor girl. Her father—well, though she did not share his sentiments, it was well known to the General what her father was—a landless outlaw, who might any day find himself hanged for treason, or broken on the wheel. She could not—would not listen to him. His very love, as declared by him, was an insult; the white horse at the door, the constant meetings at the house of Eugenie la Gracieuse, would these not soon be known all over the camp? And what then? Had he, a great soldier and gentleman, ever thought of these things? At least poor girls had to think of them. He must never see her again."

And so ten remorseless days, with the assistance of half-a-dozen volumes of the *Grand Cyrus*, Yvette Foy kept her word. The soldier of King Louis, general of all the armies of the High Cevennes, fretted and fumed like a schoolboy. He tried persuasion upon the maid-servant at the door, but that narrow-eyed Camisard smiled with close grim mouth at his clumsy military bribes. He tried threatenings upon Yvette's father, and Martin Foy told him plainly that he counted the

loss of his life but gain, and that neither Montrevel the soldier nor Louis the King had gold that could buy nor wheel that could break the spirit that was in him. And meanwhile Mistress Yvette abode in her chamber unseen of any.

His staff found their chief both an angry and awkward commander to deal with during these days, and jested each other as to the probable obduracy of the little Huguenot. They even went the length of offering a reward to the man who would "salt the tail of the pigeon on the sugar-plum tree," as the matter in hand was expressed in the army of his most Christian Majesty Louis the Fourteenth in the opening years of the eighteenth century.

But, charm they never so wisely, the turtle-dove stayed in the plum-tree—or what was the same thing, in her own proper chamber, with the doors locked and the windows fastened, and watched through the open lace-work of the curtain the General de Montrevel, gnawing fiercely his great blonde moustaches, set spurs in his beast as he rode away.

The Marquis did not want to marry. He had passed through a life of fifty years very well without it. It was a sacrament of the Church Catholic and Apostolic of which he had never proposed to partake. But Yvette Foy's mode of treatment was new to him.

In the early days when she was still anxious for his protection of her father, at the request of the Marshal she had permitted a famous miniature painter, one Deyverdun, a renegade Swiss from the Pays du Vaud, to paint a picture of her—a mere head, he said, a plaything to show his most Christian Majesty (who was fond of suchlike). It ought to have been sent away long ere this. The King might even have acknowledged it. More than three packets had been sent to Versailles

since its completion. Yet still it remained in the breast-pocket of the General's every-day uniform. It was never found there and aid on his table-toilet by his soldier servant. For each night Nicholas de Baume, Marquis de Montrevel, took it carefully out, and having shut the door, and seen that there was no one in the passage, he kissed Devverdun's picture. Then grumbling that there was no fool like an old fool, he slipped it under his pillow where his hand often grasped it in the night.

In a chamber high over the river at Millau, looking down on the shallow punts that pushed out on the sleeping summer river, and upon the old lime-kiln that smokes a peaceful pipe away to the right, patiently doing its work century a ter century, Yvette read the curt and vehement love-letters of Nicholas de Baume.

She read and smiled to herself. Did she love him ? Of course not. *Would* she love him ? Yes, surely—on her own terms. They were fervid letters, too, which a few years ago the general of King Louis would have laughed heartily at had he found any of his subalterns inscribing such sentiments on paper.

But love, like necessity, has no laws.

When Don Cupid is abroad the man who may hold a marshal's bâton to-morrow, stands no higher than the meanest carrier of pike and musketoon. And the marshal burned red with blushing as he tossed upon his sleepless bed, and thought of some phrases he had used in the letter he had left at the door of the little hard-hearted Huguenot that morning. He would rather have lost a battle than had one of them read out in barracks to his comrades-at-arms.

Yvette kept her chamber yet another five days, sending the General three scraps of paper in all, always by the hands of her friend Eugenie la Gracieuse.

Being wise, she counted nothing on words. She passed without comment from de Montrevel's most fervent appeals. She would not consent to see him, either alone or in the company of her friend.

On this subject only Eugenie knew her mind.

To her also the commander-in-chief of the High Cevennes discovered his soul, or at least so much of it as bore upon the vexed and vexing question of little Yvette Foy.

"Would she consent to see him under no conditions of companionship, and with no possible guarantees?"

Eugenie smiled a knowing smile. Yvette, to whom she was little more than cat's-paw (though in her way both a kind and a pretty one) had also been good enough to reveal to her, all so artlessly and innocently, a corner of her mind.

"Yes," she thought. "She might venture to say that there *was* one condition of companionship under which an interview would be granted to the love-sick veteran of fifty wars.

"And that?" cried de Montrevel, starting up eagerly, and coming towards Eugenie la Gracieuse as if she had been the custodian of a great treasure.

But conscious of her power, she only continued to smile. There was a certain young officer in the Maison Rouge in whom she was interested, and she cared nothing for proximate Maréchals already ripe in years. Still Yvette was Yvette, and not only at liberty to please herself, but quite certain to do so in any case.

"On what conditions, and in whose company, can I have an interview with Mademoiselle Foy?" cried the now thrice-eager soldier.

"In the company of a priest, and on conditions that

you marry her!" enunciated the go-between with some succinctness.

De Montrevel strode up and down the room for five minutes while he thought the matter out.

Then he suddenly turned and faced Eugenie.

"Has she told you to come here and ask this?" he questioned, with his teeth clenched. It seemed impossible to talk thus, but the veteran did.

"No," said Eugenie la Gracieuse, calmly, "most certainly not. Only—you wished to know my opinion. There it is. You may be guided by it or not, just as you please!"

The Marquis took a night to think the matter over. Three times he swore by all the saints known to a military man to give up all thought of the witch. Twice he opened the *persiennes* wide to throw the Swiss's miniature into the Tarn. Yet each time he paused and looked away up the river towards the uncertain red loom of the lime-kiln, near which, he knew, was a house and a dark window, neither of them visible to the eye of sense.

But in the morning he paid a visit, as soon as decorum permitted, to Mademoiselle la Gracieuse. The profession of confidante in affairs of the heart is both a difficult and a poorly paid one.

"I will marry her," he said, "go and tell her. Only for the present it must be kept secret. The King would never make me a Marshal of France if he knew."

And so, with her toilette yet incomplete, and, to tell the truth, in the *debonair* French confusion which is at once so charming and so comfortable during the forenoon hours, Eugenie sped to the house of Martin Foy, a considerable and even excellent mansion on the river front of Millau.

She delivered her message without any great

enthusiasm, adding, "But, of course, you will never think of marrying him. He is old enough to be your father."

She herself was thinking of the young officer of the Maison Rouge—which, as every one knows, wears an agreeable uniform.

She was, therefore, more than ever astonished, however, when Yvette Foy jumped up, and went dancing and skipping about her chamber.

"Surrender!" she cried, gaily, clapping her hands, "did I not tell you? Unconditional surrender! That is the word. Is he not a marquis, a general, and, in a short month, may be a marshal of France? What matters a private marriage? I shall take my own time to publish that! Why, I would marry him if he were old enough to be—my great—*great*-grandfather!"

She paused a moment, and her black eyes smiled a wicked smile upon her friend.

"And besides I—love—him!" she said, slowly.

Yet strange as it may seem, her dearest friend, Eugenie la Gracieuse, did not quite believe her.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Flower-o'-the-Corn Finds Friends.

But in spite of the plots against the Camisard strongholds, and the well-considered innocencies of Mistress Yvette, there were still hearts in the world simply and joyously happy.

Such was that of our sweet Flower-o' the-Corn, when looking down the piled mystery of the street of Saint Veran in the early winter morning, she saw her father approaching in company with a young man. Both were mounted on great Flemish cart-horses and both wore over their other garments the rough blouse of the ordinary tiller of the soil.

But underneath the dirt and discomfort inseparable from such an adventure as that which these two had undertaken, it was impossible for Flower-o'-the-Corn for a moment to mistake the tall form, erect a'most to ungainliness, the waving white locks and great, kindly, untrammelled eyes of the late chaplain of Ardmillan's regiment.

Besides, there was with him—could it be ? Yes, it was the young man whom she had seen—whom she had known as Pierre the Waggoner of Roche-à-Bayard and Hoo !

It seemed an impossible thing, but there he was, riding by her father's side, as if a part of the horse. For that is the way aides rode even during the wars

of my Lord Marlborough, whatever the nature of their other accomplishments. And behind him, on another beast, swaying like a well-filled wool-sack, was Bet Marshall, with Billy leading the remainder of the horses on a string.

The crossing of the gorge of the Dourbie had been more easily accomplished than they had supposed, and that by a happy thought of Billy Marshall's master.

"Billy," Maurice Raith had said to him, "can you steal a horse?"

To his surprise Billy drew himself up to his full height of six foot four, and his voice was one of extreme indignation as he answered, "And what age does your honour tak' me for, na?"

"I should say you were a matter of twenty-eight or thirty!" said Maurice, meekly.

"An' maybes, ye'll be takkin' me for a muckle gutsy plooman frae Lanerick or the Shire?" inquired Billy.

"I know very well that you are a Galloway gipsy, Billy," said Maurice, soothingly. "I have often heard that you were born and brought up in Kirkcudbright!"

"*Weel than*," said Billy, with the air of one who has just proved a point to mathematical demonstration, "dinna you be askin' Billy Marshall at this time o' day gin he can steal a horse! Man, he could steal them by the score—that is, if the wretched garrons hereabouts were worth tying to a head-raip!"

"Then Billy," said Maurice, clinching the matter "here are nine good horses; if we do not get them across yon blue valley, we will never see hilt nor hair o' them—no, nor the price o' them. Just consider that they are to be stolen, and that Kelton-hill is up

yonder where the houses of Saint Veran are dark against the blue. Could ye manage it? It is worth twenty gold guineas if you do!"

"May I never tak my black-thorn in at yae side o' Kelton-hill an' oot at the ither again wi' ony credit, gin I fail ye! May I never gang back to the decent Cameronian reg'ment—may I be hangit for half-an-hour by the provost's watch as a black deserter gin I dinna! 'Steal them'—quo he—I wad think it black and bitter shame in a man-body come to my time o' life if he couldna steal as mony o' anither man's cattle, let alane his maister's. Aye, an' sae could Bet, wha hasna a drap o' bluid in her body that isna the blackest blood of the Faas. An' ye a' ken it's the Faas that hae keepit the burgh hangman in decent employment an' pease-meal brose ever since there was a kingdom o' bonny Scotland. Steal a horse indeed! Man, ye dinna ken what ye are talkin' aboot, but I'll hae nane o' your siller—na, na, I'll steal for love and maister-service as an honest man should!"

If he had thought of the matter as a feat of mere scouting or spying, even as the removal of certain animals from one side of a valley to the other, Billy, ignorant of the language as he was, would certainly have blundered into the first French patrol and been shot for his pains, together with his companions. But the affair once put before him as the *stealing* of so many good Flemish horses, the thing was as good as accomplished.

At all events here they were riding easily into Saint Veran, up the narrow, not over-clean street, Maurice looking every way up and down the fronts of the houses for the first sight of a girl who had just thrown down her plain white seam (not embroidery, like Yvette's), and was now pattering down the stone stairs

as fast as her little light feet could carry her—to meet and welcome—her father.

Now Flower-o'-the-Corn had been angry with Maurice Raith. But, to tell the truth, not too angry. The woman naturally blames the woman—even when the contrary can be proven to the satisfaction of a jury. Which is a reason why in all countries where that overrated institution exists, juries consist exclusively of men.

But in not a few cases the less of law the more of justice. And Flower-o'-the-Corn's anxiety to be quite fair to Pierre the Waggoner (or, as he was soon to appear, Maurice Raith) resulted far more from an innate suspicion of the good faith of Yvette Foy than from any reasoned belief in the excellence of the young man's intentions.

For though a woman of the type of Mademoiselle Yvette can take in a man, and many men—aye, and in some instances keep up the deception till the dead bells ring, she cannot long deceive a woman, bad or good. The bad sees through her by the suspicion which is bred of kindred experience—the good by instinct.

So it chanced that Frances Wellwood was more willing to be reconciled to Maurice Raith than the young man had anticipated after his last interview. And as she appeared guarding her skirts with feminine daintiness on the doorstep of the house of the old pair with whom she had found shelter, Maurice thought that he had never seen her look more beautiful, not even that day when he had chanced upon her first among the Namur cornfields.

The cobble-stones of the hill village, still moist and slippery with the heavy white frosts of the night, the drabbled fronts of the houses once white with

lime-wash, now all colours that were slimy and unpleasant, made a striking background for the tall slender figure of the girl, shrinking gracefully within, yet eager to be without. Well-fitting boots, made by the regimental bootmaker when she was at once the plaything and the mascot of Ardmillan's hardbitten Presbyterian regiment, peeped from beneath the upheld skirt. Then the corn-ripe hair, the lips of coral, the eyes of turquoise blue, the dainty gladness of her action as she leaped fairly and squarely into her father's arms, all these touched the young soldier to the heart. It was difficult to say which fascinated him the most.

Stout old Patrick received his daughter's impulsive advance as if at the pike exercise he had been ordered to prepare to receive cavalry. As for Maurice he only wished that Flower-o'-the-Corn had somehow missed her aim.

She kissed her father, first on one cheek and then on the other, in Continental fashion.

"Carry me in!" she cried, her arms clasped about her father's neck. "Oh, it is so dirty here! And—I thought you were never—never coming," she added, somewhat irrelevantly.

And (to the wish that is father to the thought) she seemed, by an eye-glance like the sunlit sky for brightness, to include Maurice in the emphasis.

"I thought *you* were never coming," he murmured to himself, and that more than once.

It was her father who spoke first, when once he had deposited his daughter on the firm and walkable earth of the courtyard.

"This is the young man," he began, taking Maurice's hand affectionately, "known to us as the waggoner who brought the direct and official communications

from the camp of the allies. Like ourselves, and for a similar reason, he has been compelled to keep the secret for some time. He has now made it known to me that he is Captain Maurice Raith, of the staff of my Lord Marlborough, sent hither on most secret and important political business. The secret of his identity is, I am sure, safe with you, my daughter."

Flower-o'-the-Corn bowed distantly, but made no remark. Whatever her final intentions with regard to him, she had no idea of letting the young man off too cheaply. She might forgive, but she had not forgotten the last time she had seen him in the parlour of the Bon Chrétien, nor yet under what circumstances.

"Let me introduce you to my host and hostess," she said; "they are kind old people, childless, for this place more than sufficiently rich, and will be delighted to welcome you. Indeed, I have been pestered out of my life during these last weeks by people who wanted to know when it was likely that you, my father, would pay them a visit."

She was proceeding to ignore Captain Maurice somewhat markedly, taking her father by the hand, in order to guide him up the dark stairway. But Patrick Wellwood had old-fashioned notions of deportment, and would by no means precede the young man.

"Nay, my daughter," he said, "he is in a manner our guest—or at least yours! Captain Raith, will you be good enough to offer Mistress Frances your arm?"

Flower-o'-the-Corn had therefore no choice but to put her hand on the young man's sleeve, so that the mere light touch (and it was no more than a feather-weight, being indeed as near to nothing as the young woman could make it) caused his heart to beat violently.

"Captain Raith?" she repeated, icily enough, "did I understand my father to say?"

"That is my name!" said Maurice, innocently. He had no thought of guile in his heart, though he had some reason to be ashamed of the circumstances under which Frances Wellwood had last seen him, and would have given all his present wealth (a small matter enough) and all his future prospects to be able to clear up the matter to her satisfaction.

Of this, however, for the present there seemed small chance.

"Captain of which service?" said Flower-o'-the-Corn, with a glance at the red uniform of the Maison du Roi, which Maurice still wore under his waggoner's blouse.

The young man laughed, a cheerful, hearty laugh, good to hear.

"Of the English service, of course!" he answered. "I was formerly of the Cameronians, along with our friend behind there, Billy Marshall, who is in charge of the horses."

"How, then, came you by this pretty thing?" said Frances, touching the red uniform with her hand.

"That I cannot say," he replied. "I had thought to have brought with me my staff coat, with some idea that if taken by the French, I might have had at least one chance of not being hung for a spy. But some fairy must have been abroad the night when the waggons were unloaded, for when the package was finally opened, we turned out the uniform of the Maison Rouge of the King of France!"

"Ah!" said Frances, leaning a little more heavily upon his arm. The stairs were a little steeper just at that point. Then she added softly to herself, "Methinks I could put my hand upon the fairy who was abroad that night, without too great difficulty."

Maurice Raith went on, conscious only of the relaxed severity of her voice.

"But after all the matter has turned out well. For the dress has been of use to us on more than one occasion!"

And he proceeded to tell how, in company with Catinat, he had rescued Yvette Foy from the clutches of the Cadets of the Cross.

Flower-o'-the-Corn's hand dropped wholly from his arm.

"You mean Madame la Maréchale de Montrevel!" she said. And then, seeing Maurice stare aghast, she added, sharply, "Oh, no, it is not I who have lost my wits! Did you not know Yvette and she are one and the same person?"

CHAPTER XXVII.

The Thing Most Wonderful in all the Worlds.

Monsieur and Madame Montbeliard, the host and hostess of the dainty maiden who had so marvellously been transported to them across the gorge of the Dourbie, were equally glad to welcome the celebrated minister from Geneva and his young friend. That both were of Scottish blood in no way detracted from their popularity among the Huguenots, at least at that time. For ever since the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes an ever-increasing flood of immigrants had poured across the Channel, and already there were few among the Camisards who had not friends in London or the Eastern Counties, even in Edinburgh, in Fife, and the Lothians.

It was not long, therefore, before Monsieur and Madame Montbeliard had conveyed Patrick Wellwood to an upper chamber, where was hidden from prying and inquisitorial eyes a precious store of souvenirs of the old Temple of the Consistory (situated in a certain small and inconspicuous street known by the name of Threadneedle), of the Patent Church in Soho, of the Pyramid in the Seven Dials. Here also was a letter of the great Marquis de Ruvigny, who went every day by water to worship at the new church which he had caused to be built at Greenwich, addressed to good Monsieur Severin, the minister

thereof, who in his youth had been a friend of Monsieur and Madame Montbeliard, and even yet frequently corresponded with them.

But during this time there were two left below stairs who were quite otherwise employed. The jealousy of the actions of young girls, so common in conventual and Catholic France, had not, at that time, attacked the Protestant departments, and, indeed, Monsieur and Madam Montbeliard thought only of the rich spirituality and abounding grace of the letters which were to be opened to the perusal of the celebrated pastor from Geneva.

The young people were, therefore, left together without a thought. And as a first proof that this confidence had been rightly reposed in them, they looked in contrary directions out of different windows, and spoke never a word.

But no letters, however building up spiritually, nor any silence, however pre-determined, can bind the flight of time, or long close the mouths of two young people who have something to say to each other.

Maurice had by this time thrown off his blouse, and, as Billy Marshall had not yet brought him his ordinary attire, he found himself still in the by no means unbecoming dress of the Maison Rouge. Presently from his post at the window he vented a long sigh, hollow and desolate as the winds which draw and withdraw through the *gouffres* of Padirac.

Flower-o'-the-Corn smiled, but secretly and to herself.

Maurice sighed again, a sigh so mighty this time that the curtains rustled as at the rising of the valley wind down by the Dourbie.

Whereat Flower-o'-the-Corn laughed outright, and then immediately felt that she had made a mistake.

For instantly, as if stung by the rippling scorn, Maurice left his place and was standing by her side. He did not venture to touch her, however, and she bent her eyes steadily upon her white seam. She regained her gravity with an effort, and for the moment, at least, neither laughed nor smiled. She only sewed as if her livelihood depended upon the diligence of her fingers.

"That was cruel of you, do you know?" he said, his fingers itching to lay themselves upon the waves and tangles of her corn-red hair, and the clear sweeping curve of her white neck. He could not see her face, and in the circumstances that was, perhaps, as well.

Flower-o'-the-Corn looked up at him with a kind of surprise.

"What was cruel of me—to laugh?" she said; "I am sorry! I suppose you sighed because—because Yvette is not here. But *I* cannot help that, you know!"

Then she shook her head sadly, as if grieving over his iniquity.

"And she a married woman, too," she added, "though, of course, you did not know that at the time!"

The young man could not keep his hands to himself any longer. He laid one upon each of the shoulders of the girl. Rising to her feet she straightened herself haughtily. And taking one after the other dropped it in the air as if it had been a spider.

"You forget," she said, bitterly, "*I* am neither Yvette Foy, nor yet—Madame Maréchale de Montrevel!"

"Have you no pity in you?" said Maurice, meekly; "You know that I have made a grievous mistake. I —I never loved that—*woman*."

"Then the greater the shame," said Frances, quick

as a flash; "not that the matter interests me," she added, resuming her sewing calmly. "I have good eyes. They do not deceive me. I am not under any necessity to find excuses for young men who make such mistakes! They are all too apt to repeat them!"

"There is nothing I should like better," said Maurice, daringly. He began to feel that he had been long enough acting as nether millstone.

Flower-o'-the-Corn rose haughtily, folding up her sewing as she did so.

"I must go to my father! I think he is calling me," she said, with what severity she could command.

"On the contrary," said the young man, "I hear him expressing himself in excellent French concerning (if I mistake not) the effect of the victory of La Hogue upon the prospects of the Camisard cause."

"At any rate, I shall go to him," said Flower-o'-the-Corn with a persistent, but not yet completely convincing, determination.

Now what happened just after that it is hard for the most accurate chronicler to say.

Frances Wellwood had a needle in her hand. So much is certain. And as Maurice Raith took a step nearer to her, something occurred.

"Now I told you," she said, laying her hand on her breast as if to recover her breath, "I am not Yvette Foy, and—and—I hope it did hurt. You had no right."

The needle stood out threateningly, like a bayonet which had been fleshed once, and is again at the ready.

Maurice was holding his wrist, a look of ludicrous penitence upon his face.

"Yes," repeated Flower-o'-the-Corn, viciously, "I hope it did hurt. I am very glad of it."

The which, certainly, is not a wholly Christian sentiment.

And after that, somehow, the explanation came of itself—came with a rush like the Raith water in spate.

"Do not let us be held asunder by the foolish impulse of a moment, the vanity of an hour," pleaded Maurice; "I have loved you, Frances, you alone—ever since I saw you stand among the ripe wheat on the Brabant plain, with the sky above you no bluer than your eyes."

It was somehow pleasant to hear words like these from Maurice Raith, but the daughter of the chaplain of Ardmillan's regiment was not of those who are easily won.

"*She* has black eyes," she went on, maliciously; "they are very beautiful; I am sure you told her that you preferred such!"

"Indeed—indeed—I never did!" said Maurice, with a quite unnecessary fervour. "It was all the doing of that—that minx!"

"'When in doubt abuse the woman'—yes, that is an old motto," said Flower-o'-the-Corn, philosophically, "indeed, as old as Adam, the first man, who said, 'The woman Thou gavest me, she gave me to eat!'"

All the same Frances did not doubt him for a moment, and that in spite of Yvette having undoubtedly saved her life—and more than her life—at the great cradle of Saint Veran, when she fell into the hands of the Cadets of the Cross.

But then, even good women never get their dues from their own sex—how much less the others!

Maurice, however, was in no way discouraged. She made no further movement to leave the room, and the young aide of my Lord Marlborough knew that so long as a woman does that, she will listen to reason—or, as the case may be, to unreason. At all events, she will listen.

There was a bright flush of rose on the girl's cheeks

which had not been there when she sprang daintily into her father's arms, or even when she had come upstairs so poutingly upon Maurice Raith's arm. She stood examining her seam, apparently lost in admiration at the fineness of the stitches. She stood sideways to Maurice, so that he could only partially see her face, which was in shadow.

"Frances," he continued manfully, "I love you. I have loved you a long time. I have told your father that I love you. He knows who I am, and at least he does not disapprove. But, of course, *that* has nothing to do with you and me. You must like me or leave me on your own account. I do not ask you to be in any haste. One thing only do I require of you now. To one question only do I believe that I am entitled to an answer——!"

Here Flower-o'-the-Corn moved her feet uneasily on the uncovered wooden floor, but she did not speak.

"Do you love any man so much that you feel there is no room in your heart for me?"

The blue eyes of Flower-o'-the-Corn flashed upon him almost more mischievously, though less wickedly, than those other black ones of Yvette Foy.

"Yes!" she said. That, and no more. He was answered, and now she looked full at him as if daring him to continue.

The sunburnt, out-of-doors hue upon Maurice Raith's face paled instantly to a ghastly paleness. His finger-nails gripped deep into his palms, his head grew suddenly light, the room turned round, and had he not been near the window-sill he might have fallen. The girl's answer, coming sharp as a pistol-shot, for the moment paralysed him.

The blue eyes followed his every movement at first with doubt, to which followed surprise. Then

came compunction, and lastly Flower-o'-the-Corn added softly, "*I—meant—my—father!*"

Brought up as Frances had been among the talk of men, the constant alternation (as it were) of a sober love-making and the Shorter Catechism, she could hardly believe that the matter could be so serious to a man as she knew it must be to a woman, whose fate it is to suffer or rejoice all her life long, according to her heart's choice.

And above all an aide, a favourite of my Lord Marlborough's, who had declared that till a man has been a dozen times in love he does not know either how to tell a lie or how to write a diplomatic letter! It was inconceivable! Yes; she liked the young man. She was ready to find him interesting. Her father was on his side. So far, good! But as she looked at the ghastly pallor, the sudden shaking of the pillars of being, she felt that this was something mightier than aught she had yet experienced.

So many men had come to her father's quarters in the camp—old men of the regiment with a genuine interest in religion, who remembered a time when she had sat upon their knees, or who for reasons of their own affected to remember—that Flower-o'-the-Corn was never quite sure which of the two questions she would be called upon to answer, "Do you love me?" or "What is the chief end of man?"

But this young man was somehow different from all the others. There was no affectation about those pallid lips, that sudden ebbing of the tide of life with which she found herself face to face. Compunction took hold upon her suddenly. For Frances Wellwood had a tender heart—not when it suited her, like Yvette Foy—but always, and because she could not help it.

She held out her hand impulsively. There was no

needle in it this time. "I am sorry," she said, very simply.

And so, while the voice of Patrick Wellwood rose and fell in the exposition of the true doctrine of John Calvin, and the rustling of letters spiritual and letters controversial reached their ears from above, it came to these two that they loved each the other with a great love, and for once Maurice Raith blessed his stars that the Five Points of Doctrine, the Divine Decrees, Freewill and Foreknowledge Absolute, take some considerable time to state and settle.

For whatsoever trials there were awaiting them, and what dangers soever loomed up in the near future, the great event, the greatest in any single life, had happened. A woman out of a pure heart had committed herself without reserve or backdrawing to the man who told her that he loved her.

Revolutions and empires, the rise and fall of great regalities, are not greater than this. And for this reason. Without this yielding and taking of women and men no kingdom could stand, no revolution succeed — nothing either great or small be brought to pass. The generations of men would pass away, and the earth itself rol through space, barren, lifeless, and desolate as the dimpled lava deserts of our attendant moon.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Vae Victis !

Though Cavalier had promised to do what in him lay to end the war, yet no man knew better than he how long and unkindly was the road which lay between promise and performance. He was really chief of the entire Camisard revolt, though nominally of one only of the five legions into which they were divided.

More than once Yvette Foy was compelled to exert her personal influence over the young Camisard leader, before he could be brought to the point of a secret meeting with de Montrevel. Indeed it was not till all hope of active military assistance from the British had died away, that Cavalier agreed to the momentous interview.

"You have no hope save in the clemency of the king," urged Yvette; "the English will not help you to more than a little powder and shot. Their sails have disappeared over the horizon as swiftly as they came. They will not return. You are here on these bleak mountains, surrounded on all sides by hostile populations. What chance, think you, is there for a few hundred peasants against the armies of France?"

"We have held these same mountains for five years —we poor ill-armed folks!" said Cavalier, stung by the girl's tone more than by her words. But all the same he did not dare to look at her. That he still felt

was dangerous. They were standing close together in the window of the parlour of the Bon Chrétien, watching the whirling snowflakes that came to them over the huge whale-backed tableland of the Causse de Larzac, now more than ever barren and desolate.

"But what sort of years?" retorted the girl, sharply; "were they not years when the king was compelled to fight against all the powers of Europe? That cannot go on for ever, and, then, what will you do against the armies which have vanquished Spain, fought on all the borderlands of the empire, conquered the Low Countries? They will overflow you, as the Tarn in flood sweeps away a sandbank of the summer droughts!"

Jean Cavalier waved his hand at the swirl of the snowstorm without.

"There, at least, is one of our defences," he said. "The soldiers of your fine de Montrevel will think twice before they attack La Cavalerie with that to guard us front and rear, on this side and on that!"

Yvette Foy bit her lip secretly, and promised herself that he should yet pay for this obstinacy. But she knew that she had too strong a hold upon her victim. It was simply a question of time.

"Bah!" she cried, "you think so, do you? I took you for a soldier. I see—you are only——"

"*What?*" interrupted Jean Cavalier, the red rushing up hotly to his brow. He thought she was about to call him "the Genevan baker's boy," as even those of his own sect who scorned him never scrupled to do.

"A Caussenard ram that butts at a wall with his head down!" said the girl, smiling.

Now, perhaps, because Jean Cavalier had lost the Voice that spoke in his soul, there came to him a clearer sense than ever before of the hopelessness of the strife.

"True, true!" he murmured, more to himself than to her, "it is true. I am even as one that strikes out his brains wilfully against a stone wall."

"Ah, if there were not others—who trust you—who love you," she said, softly, putting her hand upon his arm, "you might have a right to throw away your life. But you know, alas! all too well—that your life is precious, most precious, to others—to me!"

Jean Cavalier was silent. The snowflakes which crowded wilderingly without, jostling each other in their haste to reach the ground, were not more wayward and fitfully confused than his thoughts. Hitherto the young general of the Camisards had marched breast-forward to a clearly defined goal. Now the storm of his passions, the blind impulses that came to him from without, set him flitting and floating like a snowflake windblown through a tormented chaos of greyness, going he knew not whither.

He looked up at the girl. There was an appeal in his eyes—a kind of dumb agony, possible only to the young when they first find themselves in the grip of fate.

"Why—oh, why do you strive to make me unfaithful to the Voice? What is it to you?" he said, with a certain pathos which was yet not reproach, but rather a confession of his own weakness and of the supremacy of his adversary's strength.

"Do *I* deserve nothing at your hands?" she said in a low and thrilling whisper. "Is all I have done—all I have given up, nothing to you?"

"God knows it is everything to me, Yvette," he made answer; "but remember, I too have given up my all for you—my people, my father's house, the Voice that spake to me, the Pillar of Fire that moved before—God and His sacraments—all these are lost to me! Have I truly gained you?"

She put her palms against his breast and pushed him a little away from her.

"Ah, I see—now you would go back—you think I am not worth the sacrifice!" she murmured, soft and cooing like a midsummer dove on the woodedges when its mate sits brooding on the nest.

"No, by the throne and Him that sitteth thereon, you are not!" burst out the young man, roughly. Then, making a gesture of hopeless resignation with his hands, he added, "You are not worth it, I know—but, 'fore God, I cannot help it. You have taken my very soul in your net!"

Then arose the Woman to whom (for the sins of men) power is given to sway them in their weaknesses. Her face was jubilant, her eyes, dark and moist—with triumph, not with tears—were fixed upon the bowed head of the young man. A smile that was not good to see curved her crimson lips into something like a sneer. Ah, he was one among many, verily—but such an one.

The mood passed, and she leaned forward with her hand on his shoulder. "You will come to-night, then—to see the Marshal?" she murmured in his ear.

"As well this night as another!" he cried, starting up and looking her in the face with the same gesture of hopeless surrender. "I am yours. Do with me that which you would."

Yvette's eyes did not leave his face for a moment. The iron was hot, but she knew from experience that she must strike delicately. It was not a time for the blacksmith's anvil and the clang of the forehammer. Daintily as a goldsmith fines out his filigree, she set herself to her task.

"Not so," she whispered, meekly, "believe me, I am as grieved for this poor folk as ever you can be. Is

not my father also one of them, a leader and a chief ? Would I do aught to hurt either him or them ? Is not my life, my all, wrapped up in this place, dependent upon the goodwill of these poor honest neighbours ? It is because I know so much, see so clearly —that I am working for the preservation of these ignorant villagers—why else should I take the trouble ? It is no light matter to risk misconstruction from one's best friends, from those for whom one has given up all ! "

And at this point, by what means soever Yvette Foy achieved the marvel—whether by touching the back of her throat with her tongue, as the manner of some is, or in some other fashion—certain it is that two great burning drops fell on the back of the young man's hand. And when he looked suddenly up, lo ! the tears were running freely down the cheeks of that innocent and simple maiden, Mistress Yvette Foy.

Jean Cavalier sprang to his feet. He clasped the girl in his arms. " I will come," he said. " You shall not weep—not for me—I am not worthy of it. And I see that you do love me ! Tell me that you do ! "

" To-night, then ? " she sobbed, ignoring his appeal.

" Yes—to-night—if you will," he answered. " What thou doest, do quickly," he added.

All unconsciously he had used the words of Another —of One who also was betrayed with a kiss.

" To-night, then," she said, touching his short crisp curls softly with her lips and smiling through her tears, " at the Ferry-house of Beaucaire upon the Tarn. I will guide you there. We shall go hand in hand ! "

CHAPTER XXIX.

The Ferry of Beaucaire.

The night came, as usual, with the swift ebbing of the day. But it was midwinter, and even in the Midi the twilight began soon after mid-afternoon, down there by the smoothly-flowing Tarn. There was little snow on the fields—a sprinkling merely, from which the vine-stocks stood out, recalling the blackened hands of martyrs burned at the stake and afterwards buried to the wrists. Vainly they seemed to cry from the ground against the fury of religious hate which was going on all about them.

Far and near the river was cumbered with floating cakes of ice, detached from the pools higher up. There came from the gorges a faint ripping sound like a dress-maker tearing cloth. It was the icecakes grinding one against the other.

Yet there was obviously something important afoot in the vicinity of the Ferry of Beaucaire. A smell of hot metal declared to the nostril that there were dark lanterns about. A horse neighed in the middle distance and was answered from behind a wood. Once a light showed for a moment from the Millau side, and was incontinently extinguished as if a foot had been set upon a candle. All about the air was full of the indescribable stir and uneasiness inseparable from human presences near at hand but unseen.

So much for the side of the river nearest to the quarters of the commander-in-chief of the King of France, the Marquis de Montrevel. The side of the Tarn towards the Causse of Larzac lay in deepest gloom. Frowning rocks overshadowed the pools, and even the white foam of the shallower rapids could not show the faintest haze of grey through the dense inky black. It seemed impossible for any living thing to descend those frowning precipices. Even in broad daylight the task appeared more suited to goats than to men. In the moonless night the attempt seemed mad and impossible.

Yet for more than an hour two people had been following the dog's trail which led zig-zag down the bald precipices of the Causse where they overhang the river. The stars above them grew sparser and more rainbow-like in their sparkling as the adventurers dipped lower into the valley haze.

But the two minded nothing but themselves—neither in the heavens above nor in the earth beneath—as, indeed, is the way of such. They had heard behind them as they fled from La Cavalerie the sound of the chaunted evening psalm, telling of peace and mercy and the stern joys of righteousness. To Yvette Foy it was no more than the crying of the whooper swans high overhead in the windless November dusk, or the winter wolves howling across the wilderness in the grey dawnings. But to the ear of Jean Cavalier every note came sharp-toothed with remorse. Each line was hallowed by the associations of bygone communions, of gales of the Spirit sweeping over the congregation of the Lord's folk. Every well-remembered word edged itself and cut sharp to the dividing asunder of soul and marrow. Each pause for prayer brought back the faces of his brethren—the gloomy

Temple, the bowed heads, the eyes veiled and dim, the sweet infinitely gracious hush that follows the act of the breaking of bread.

And clearer than all Cavalier saw the empty place where *he* should have stood—the little red Bible he had brought from Geneva, with a hundred places marked here and there, yellowed at the bottom of every page by the thumb-grip. He had never thought to part with that. It was to have accompanied him to the coffin, so that (in That Day) he might, as it were, readily find the place and stand with the Charter of Salvation patent in his hand.

Ah, it was over. Standing high as heaven, he had fallen lower than the lowest pit. For others there might be hope. For him none. He had saved others. They told him so day by day in the open consistory of the saints—how this one and that laid his turning to God to the account of Jean Cavalier.

Well, at least all would be over now, once and for ever. He was about to betray the folk who had stood by him. He was about to deliver them into the hands of the bloody persecutors. His name, that had been written among the stars, would now be hurled in the dust.

The Camisard shepherd, as he wrapped his plaid about him on the Causse, watching the sheep by night, would spit at the name of Jean Cavalier. The martyr in the red robe of flames or looking into the muskets' mouth, would lift up a hand and testify against him. Mothers in the Huguenot Israel would speak of him to their children as the great and awful Warning, the Achan of Cursing in the camp of the faithful.

Jean Cavalier felt all this as he went further from the low easily-destructible walls which for his sake the hands of his faithful hillmen had built. He overpassed the ordered lines of trenches, now half-filled with snow,

and left behind him the sound of that slow and sorrowful chaunting. Once he put his hands to his ears to shut out that call. But it came clearer than ever, sharp as reproach. They seemed to be singing over an open grave—the entombment of all that was noble and worthy in Jean Cavalier. Yet he went on. For him the die was cast. It was too late. All was finished. There was no oil any more in his lamp. He had spilled it upon the highway—for him now no future life—no God—no hope—only a blackness of darkness for ever, and the good angel of Jean Cavalier tearfully veiling his face with his wings. He was doomed to go to his own place, with Judas and Cain as the three types of all the traitorous evil of the world.

He drew a long sigh—at least (if among the powers of evil there be any kindly demons) he had not sold himself for naught.

Was there not at least a soft hand in his? He could see against the snow the outline of a woman's form. He knew, even under the fur-lined cloak, that it was beautiful. Once when she turned to guide him, he could see the stars shine in her eyes, which otherwise (he knew) were black as the night upon the pools of the Tarn.

Somewhere below there lay the Ferry-house of Beaucaire. What awaited him down in that gulf of blackness? At that moment Yvette nestled closer to him. He felt the warmth grow and tingle about his heart. Many things began to dissolve—to alter and change. Remorse and reproach no longer troubled him. He heard no more the sound of the solemn singing. The dirge-like music ceased. The empty grave?—Well, for everyone on the face of the world there awaited a grave! His, surely, could not be more terrible or more disgraceful than the rest. Death closed all. He held by

that. What was it that the Scripture said? The words of the Preacher—the man who understood both wisdom and folly—the way of men with men and the way of men with a maid? Like him Jean Cavalier said in his heart, "As it happeneth to the fool so also it happeneth to the wise man! This also is vanity. For how dieth the wise man?—As the fool dieth!"

The lights of La Cavalerie he had left far behind him—the little defenced houses of the Camisards—honest seekers after truth, each one of whom would gladly have laid down their lives for him—the broader splashes shed from the Temple, through the open doors of which the songs of Zion pealed across the snow—the stark emptiness and blank window squares of the gate-house opposite to his own dwelling, where had dwelt the fair young Englishwoman and her father, to whom for a time he had been as a son—all these he remembered no more. They passed utterly from him. They were wiped out by the mere proximity of the woman whose heart was snares and nets, and whose hands were as bands of steel.

They went down hand in hand. In the stillness of the night Jean Cavalier could hear plainly the beating of the girl's heart, and once as they stood panting on a ledge her breath came up to him sweet as the scent of dew-wet wallflower on a morn in May.

So the man went on, following his fate straightway, as an ox going to the slaughter or a fool to the correction of the stocks.

It was strange with what sureness of instinct the girl found her way. Where Cavalier, indurated and accustomed to night surprises as he was, could see one yard, she could see ten.

Not once did she fall or hesitate. Down, down they went, clinging desperately to stray tree stems or

following mere threads of track which the very mountain sheep would shy at and go far about to seek easier paths.

The stars grew fewer above them. The deep gorge of the Tarn shut them in. The stone dislodged by the iron-shod heel of Jean Cavalier (never by that of his companion, who moved silently as a shadow) sprang at once into a long silence which was broken only by the sudden plunge far below, as it struck the sleeping pool, or met with a metallic "tang" one of the thin cakes of floating ice that blocked all but the swiftest parts of the current.

Thus it was that Yvette Foy did her master's work —faithfully and well—one thought for him and two for herself, and as for Jean Cavalier—bah! he did not count at all.

They came to the Ferry by which men pass over, not to the perilous heights of the great Causes down which these two had adventured, but up the valley of the Dourbie to the green crofts of Nant and the fat lands of St. Jean.

Almost Yvette had her victim between the thills—almost, but not quite. Still, he might have fled—there was yet time. But he himself had spoken a true word. God had departed from him. The door was shut and there was none to open.

* * * * * *

All was dark across the water as they stood on the crisp grass of the river margin, hand in hand. It was milder down there. The wind was still and edgeless after the icy Causse. But Cavalier, listening intently, could hear the little thin floes adrift on the river ripping and rustling like rats among the sheaves in a barn.

Then mellow and large and full the voice of Yvette Foy passed across to the further shore. "*Vive le*

Roi—le Roi—le Roi !" she cried over and over again in the modulated tones of one who sends a summons to the kine-herd to turn homeward towards the milking bars.

"*Le Roi—le Roi !*" came back the scarce-diminished echo, so clear and loud, that Cavalier himself started. He thought someone had answered. But for a long minute there was no sound. And then he could hear the dip of oars which grew nearer and more imminent across the black flood.

"Ice," he could hear a voice say, "quick with your boat-hook ! Push off there, I tell you !"

Shrouded forms, the prow of a boat from which streamed away a swirl of phosphorescent light, the grind of an iron-shod keel on a sand-bank, the flash of an oar feathering, the fending screech of a metal prong on the rock, and lo ! the boat they had come to find was waiting for them.

"*My lady !*"

"*Marquis !*"

"He is here—ready to do the King's bidding !"

So without a word Jean Cavalier stepped among the servants of the King of France, and lost his claim to be numbered among the servants of the Other Kingdom.

The boat pushed off. The hills which sheltered the Camisard legends retreated. The stars looked out. Lanterns began to gleam on the shore to which they were going. After the first words of greeting no one had spoken. The oars plashed in the dark water. Sometimes they scraped and rasped on the floating ice. Then in a moment he realised that having done her work, Yvette was no longer by his side ! Jean Cavalier was facing his fate without God and without hope in the world. Also without the woman who had brought him thither !

CHAPTER XXX.

Apples of Sodom.

Nicholas de Baume, Marquis de Montrevel, was little given to respect of persons. As a consequence he had never risen very high in the armies or councils of Louis le Grand. Yet it was little de Montrevel cared. But he understood very well the merits of a good horse, a pretty woman, or a brave man. To these he was prepared to do homage, after their kind, wherever found.

So the "Baker's Apprentice" was received with as high honours as though he, too, had been a new-made Marshal of France and a leader of the King's armies.

Montrevel knew very well the palace plots that were hatching against himself, and that he would not long remain Generalissimo of the King's forces in the Cevennes. But since he had all the fortune he needed, as much glory as would serve him, and for a companion the woman who, with all her faults, her follies and her sins, still suited him the best, he was disposed to be content.

"I had as lief marry an ewe-lamb with a garland round its innocent neck as a girl from a convent," he said. "I am an old fellow. I have served many apprenticeships, seen many campaigns, broken down many fortress walls, and now I prefer my salad well dowsed with pepper, spice, and vinegar, rather than drenched in oil!"

When the boat reached the other side of the Tarn, Cavalier could see dimly the forms of grenadiers in their tall peaked caps drawn on either side. In the darkness he could hear the unanimous rustle of ordered movement as the arms rose to the salute, and fell again to the men's sides.

Near by there was a grove of dark trees—pines by the sound of the wind among their branches. For five minutes Cavalier threaded aisle after sombre aisle of these. They descended into a dell, as it had been an ancient limestone quarry. Here, blazing with light, a tent was pitched. Others less bright and gay stood around.

The Marquis de Montrevel led the way, and what was the young man's wonderment to see that on the Marshal's arm there hung, looking tenderly up into his weather-beaten face—who but Yvette Foy, daughter of the Camisard innkeeper of La Cavalerie!

The table was spread for supper as they entered. Servants, attired like the foresters of a great nobleman and mighty hunter, stood in ordered rows. The grenadiers of the guard halted at the tent-door. Officers in splendid uniforms rose to greet their commander-in-chief. That sturdy veteran conducted Yvette with grave courtesy to the head of the table. As he stood for a moment, waiting till a little bustle subsided at the end of the tent nearest to the door, he glanced down at his companion with pride, and yet with an appreciation of the situation more than half-humorous.

There was a proud smile of triumph on her beautiful dark face. And it was poor Jean Cavalier's thought, the rat of a useless remorse gnawing meantime at his vitals, that never woman looked so beautiful.

The Marshal raised his hand and commanded silence with a gesture at once large and gracious.

Then he took Yvette Foy by the hand, holding the fingers a little high in his, not without a certain pride.

"Gentlemen of the King's army and my good comrades," he said, "I present to you my wife, Madame the Marquise de Montrevel."

Whereupon he sat down and ordered in the soup.

Yvette was seated on his right hand, and Cavalier, all overwhelmed and a little dazed by the lights and the flood of emotions, found himself on his left. He stood astonished, almost in act to flee, till the servant detailed to wait upon him, seeing his difficulty, laid a hand on his shoulder and seated him on his chair with a gentle compulsion.

A flood of indignant wonder rose slowly within him. Verily he had sold himself for naught—for the light word of a woman without honour. The flattering eye, the caressing hand, the pouting lips—there she was trying them on another. They could be never more for him! What a fool he had been!

The repast went on. Cavalier, who in Geneva had seen nothing but the simplest and severest of repasts, and in La Cavalerie had dwelt in a gate-house alone, was confounded by the sparkling of glass and silver, the tinkling of wine-pitchers against Venetian goblets, the purple foaming of Burgundy poured into shining tankards, the crowd of gay uniforms, the constant coming and going of servants and messengers in gay liveries. Even the detail of the table manners was strange to him, and he ate what was on his plate mechanically, or more often left it wholly untouched.

The Maréchal, an old campaigner and man of the world, perhaps divining some part of the young man's feelings, left him pretty much to himself, only pledging him once or twice, for form's sake, under the designation of "Mon Cousin."

Yvette never so much as glanced at him. The building was raised now. The scaffolding might come down when it liked. She sat in that great military mess tent, with the high officers of the King's Household troops about her, eager yet cool, ready with her smiles and her banter, equal—and more than equal—to that occasion or any other. And her husband watched her with not a little pride.

To his chosen confidant, Stephen Leroux, paymaster of the troops in the High Cevennes, who came and leaned over his chair, he whispered, in an expansion of confidence, while Yvette was engaging half-a-dozen in talk at once, "What a wife for an old campaigner like me! Eh, Leroux? No dull dumps in our house! I might have married, had I been a fool, a chit from the seminary, with a rabbit face and the manners of a frightened governess. But see the little one holding her own. Did you ever hear anything like it?"

Leroux looked down at his general along the side of his nose, with a faintly quizzical expression, but nodded his head in smiling agreement. He wondered if the Marshal would like this badinage of Yvette's quite so much in a few years. To him it did not seem quite—housewifely, he would have said.

But after all it was not his business, but that of the Marquis's heirs; and wiser men and better soldiers than Nicholas de Baume had made fools of themselves about just such a woman. The dinner drew to a close with the clearing of all the fragments down to the farther end of the table, where the soldier-servants and officers of the Marshal's household proceeded forthwith to regale themselves, as was the jovial custom of the Commander-in-chief of the Cevennes, while those at the upper end drew more closely together, and

drank in great bumpers to the health of the King, to that of the general, and to "All the glories of France."

It was naturally a somewhat strange experience for Jean Cavalier to find himself on his legs drinking to the good fortune of the King against whom he had so long stood successfully in arms. However, he had not long time to think about it, for de Montrevel touched him on the shoulder immediately after, and said, "Now sir, if you are ready, we will proceed to finish our affair."

Then he turned to the company with his usual courtesy.

"You will excuse me," he said, "I have some matters to arrange with this, my young kinsman, who has been good enough to escort my wife to our camp!"

Whereupon the company, both soldiers and servants, rose, and with a mighty unanimous clatter of swords, whose blades met in an arch over the table, and glasses that clinked in the other hand, they drank to the health of the Marshal and his lady.

A signal to the guard followed. They fell in before and behind, silent and precise. The Marquis de Montrevel gave his arm to his wife. Jean Cavalier followed behind, his head bowed, and his soul within him mere sackcloth and ashes.

They mounted out of the quarry, but had not far to go through the pinewood before they came to the headquarters of the general. It was a white house in a vineyard, with tall winter-stripped trees like sentinels before the door. Jean Cavalier felt on every side of him the ordered rhythm and movement of regular troops—the foot swung to a second, the bayonet entered or shifted in just so many movements. Guards lined the approaches, standing near enough for him to see, even in the dim light, the round spots of light made by their

buttons, and the whiter splotches of their buckle gaiters.

"And now, General Cavalier," said the Marshal after he had motioned the young man to a chair, "what have you to say to me?"

Jean Cavalier was a young man and a brave man. He had, it is true, been led away by a temptation which older and more experienced men might have escaped. At all events they would certainly have sold themselves for a higher price in a better market. But whatever had been the bitterness of his disappointment, he was very far from revenging it upon the woman.

"Sir," he answered, looking straight into the eyes of the sturdy old soldier of King Louis, "it is for you to speak to me. This lady at your right hand has informed me that it was your wish to see me. I am here."

"I am given to understand," said the Marshal, "that you wish to put an end to the war by surrendering to the clemency of the King!"

"Not to his clemency, but to his justice!" said Cavalier, boldly.

The old soldier shrugged his shoulders.

"I presume," he said, "that you did not come here to dispute with me about words. You desire to end this war. So, I may admit, do I. You, on your side, cannot finish it by hacking to pieces a priest or two taken at random among the villages. Neither can we make of the Cevenols good subjects of the King by the rough dragooning of the Cadets of the Cross. The question is, 'What then?'"

"This lady has informed me," Cavalier adhered to the formula, finding a certain satisfaction in it, "that in return for a cessation of the war in the countries of the Cevennes, the King would grant freedom

of faith and worship, and permit his Protestant subjects to serve in the foreign wars, where we could best prove our devotion to his person."

The Marshal pinched Yvette's ear as she sat beside him, fingering a piece of lace which fell from the wide embroidered collar which she wore—every stitch of it her own work, for indeed she was no sluggard.

"I fear," he said, "that this pretty one hath somewhat exceeded her instructions. Even I cannot promise you so much. Others might have no scruple. But not Nicholas de Baume. I will promise you no terms which I do not believe that I can persuade the King to agree to. It is true that his Majesty is tired of this pet y war, which, without consuming many men or being of international importance, yet locks up useful regiments and (here he coughed), if I may say so, some of the best officers his Majesty possesses as well!"

Cavalier did not answer, waiting for the Marquis to continue.

"But I *can* promise you," he said, after a pause, "that the King will accept your service, that he will make you commander of all the troops you are able to raise for service abroad. He will also remove the officers who had been signally unsuccessful in restoring order in the Cevennes, and he will grant your friends freedom of opinion in matters religious!"

"What does that mean?" said Cavalier, brusquely. "Can we worship according to our consciences the God of our fathers?"

The Marquis de Montrevel made a slight motion of impatience.

"As to that," he said, "it depends on what you mean. His Majesty is, as you know, of the religion Catholic. So am I. So is my wife. (He bowed.)

So are all officers and true servants of the King. So is Madame de Maintenon."

He smiled somewhat more broadly.

"Especially Madame," he said again, with a smack of his lips as if relishing the flavour of wine.

"Now it is not to be supposed," he went on, "that the King and Sergeant Pouzin on guard outside there, chief treasurer Leroux and the Maire of the village, my wife and Madame at Versailles, all agree in their hearts as to the nature of the Deity, or concerning the proper use of incense, or the rights and wrongs of the Port Royal Catechism (which, by the way, few of us have ever read). Nevertheless we are all Catholics—good Catholics—that is to say, of the King's religion—without fear and without reproach. My relative, the late M. de Montaigne, hath said something to a kindred effect, but in fitter words than I.

"Now it is not to be imagined for a moment that the most royal son of St. Louis is not better informed concerning these great matters (especially considering that he hath the valued assistance of Madame de Maintenon, widow of M. Scarron of happy memory) than a parcel—pardon the word—of Genevan pastors and Cevenol herdsmen, who have only charged their own consciences with the solution of the problem? You follow me?"

Cavalier bowed his head without answering. The General's Gallio phrases grated on him worse than the oaths and revilings of the partisan. He was too simple to understand irony.

"So," continued the Marquis, more gravely, "it amounts to this, that I can promise you liberty of conscience, but not liberty of proclaiming that conscience. You will then have as much freedom as I—I am not always able to declare my own beliefs. It is a good

maxim—take it from a man well-nigh thrice your age —'Tell only half the truth to a woman, the hundredth part thereof to a king!'"

"If the Cevennes are pacified," said Cavalier, his downrightness cutting the sophistry as a knife cuts butter, "will the chapels and temples be put down? Will the persecuting priests and vicars return? Shall we of the faith be dragooned into attending a worship that we detest, upon the pain of death or exile?"

"I promise you that you shall be able to worship your God in your own way, so long as no display is made. You shall have your pastors, who shall dwell among you and break bread with you. More I cannot promise, as an honest man and a servant of the King!"

"And if we do not?" said Cavalier, rising to his feet.

"Ah," said the Marshal, his face falling, "I trust it will not come to that. My reign here is nearly over. If the matter is not finished now, the wind that is already sown shall be reaped as the whirlwind among these mountains before many months are over. I have fought you fairly; no man of you can say other than that! But the man who comes after me will burn your homes with fire, sow your hearthstones with salt, and leave the High Cevennes bare as the palm of my hand, without inhabitant, as a land whereto never man came!"

During this speech Yvette for the first time raised her eyes, not to the face of Cavalier, but to that of her husband. She moved her head aside very slightly, as if making a signal agreed upon. The Marquis nodded, touched a bell at his side, and an officer instantly appeared.

"I have a letter to write, very urgent," he said; "I pray you bear my wife company till my return. Pardon the discourtesy. I shall not keep you long waiting."

CHAPTER XXXI.

Jean Cavalier's Last Temptation.

With a bow and a smile he went out, and Jean Cavalier was left once more alone with Yvette Foy. The girl regarded him long and steadily from under her lashes. Had the sceptre indeed departed from her? Was her power utterly gone? It seemed like it, for the man never so much as glanced at her. But those who have followed thus far the career of this young woman, know that the daughters of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light. There was to be no direct attack this time. A long sad silence deepened and hung brooding over them both.

At last, when she thought the time was ripe, Yvette broke it, speaking in a voice in which sadness mingled with the compulsion of tragical fate.

"I do not ask you to forgive me," she murmured, "that I cannot hope for. I only ask you to believe that if there has been any deceit, it was not of my own choosing. I did all for the best. I was sworn to silence. To speak the whole truth would have ruined —*him!*" (She pointed without to where in an anteroom the steady murmur of a voice told that the Marshal was dictating his despatch.) "He made me promise never to reveal our marriage—to keep it even from my own father. For his sake I have done

so, and only to-night has he removed the oath from me by proclaiming the truth himself."

Yvette had risen, and now stood beside the young Camisard leader, the light of the lamp shining down upon her shapely head. He moved a little apart and withdrew his sleeve from her touch.

A quick little sob, almost inaudible, rose in her throat. "I know—I know," she said in a low voice more to herself than to him. "I do not deserve anything else. One is not free to love where one would. Life is very hard for a woman. Jean, I do not ask you to forgive me, but be kind to me—for—for my heart is broken—broken!"

She breathed the final word upon the air with a wonderful effect of tenderness. Again there came the sob, again the tear, not falling in great drops this time, but softly flowing without sound or ostentation, as if the fountains of the inner deep were unsealed. But the heart of the young man was not now so easily moved. Even your Yvettes can only do such things twice at most—that is, and succeed.

She was compelled, therefore, to try another tack. She bit her lip with anger, and in her heart registered a vow that Jean Cavalier should pay for this shame that he had put upon her. Then she smiled. For Yvette reflected in a perfectly Spartan manner that a disgrace that is only witnessed by one, only known to one, is no disgrace at all. The only God she feared was rumour with its thousand tongues. And now in the Marshal she had a perfect defence from every slanderous foe and jealous rival. It was all finished, that hither-and-thither life, its shifts and stratagems, its doubtful chances and wayward adventurings. Well, it had been far from uninteresting. She had ruled people by ruling the rulers, and the final proof of her

power was this young man standing in the quarters of the Marquis de Montrevel—in her own husband's chamber, with the guards doubled without and the whole camp on the alert through the long winter's night.

Truly if any woman had a right to think well of herself it was Yvette de Baume, Marquise de Montrevel, sometime called Yvette Foy, late of the auberge of the Bon Chrétien in the Camisard village of La Cavalerie.

Like a flash of lightning the anger passed sudden-white across her face. "Sir," she said, "you may thank your gods that I brought you here. You have come to the house of a man who knows how to deal honestly. You are offered such terms as will never be given to you again. From me you shall have no more pleading, no more humbling of myself. If you have anything against me, go with your complaint to my husband. He is without there. What I have done, I have done. He will answer for me!"

"I have nothing against you," said Jean Cavalier more gently than can be believed, "nothing against any, save only myself."

It may be set to the small credit of Yvette Foy (to conserve the name by which she is best remembered) that at this point she gave vent to a slight and genuine sigh.

"I am sorry," she murmured, and for once she was not acting a part or thinking of an effect.

By a sudden flash of intuition she seemed to see the young man's career as it might have been, and also as she had made it. But in an another moment the impulse had passed and Yvette Foy once more thought only of herself and her plottings. She controlled herself instantly, putting so foolish a thing as compassion aside. She must do her best to bring the matter to a conclusion.

"Forgive me, do not let us waste time about that," she said; "agree quickly with the Marshal. He is not a hard man. You shall go back to the folk of the mountains with a message of peace. Between us you and I will end the war. There shall be no more brother's blood shed by brother. I will pledge myself that you shall see the King himself, and that he will ratify the word which my husband speaks."

"I cannot betray those who have trusted in me," said Cavalier. "I will go back as I came. I will die as a soldier of the Lord—in the trenches, if indeed I am no more worthy to lead the people in the day of battle."

"Ah, do so," answered the girl, with a slight curve of the lip.

Cavalier strode to the door without deigning any answer. He passed the open alcove in which the Marshal was still dictating to his secretary. De Montrevel did not pause or look up. But, as Cavalier opened the door—a common countryman's kitchen door opening outward in two leaves—his eye caught a descending flash of steel. He found two bayonets at his breast and two more were crossed before him to bar his way.

He stood a moment with the door in his hand.

"Go on," said a voice behind him; "why do you not go as you said, and tell the people of La Cavalerie that you have escaped out of the mouth of the lion?"

Cavalier turned about and saw Yvette standing in the passage. The light of the lamp which she held in her right hand streamed down upon her blue-black hair and pale beautiful face.

Finding his way thus barred by the soldiers of the King, the young man turned, and going straight back into the chamber where the conference had begun, he waited. Yvette, still smiling, slowly returned and set the lamp down in its place. Triumphant as she was,

Yvette could not escape a certain shiver of anxiety as she turned to face Jean Cavalier. For once she felt herself the weaker. Yet there was nothing militant or even reproachful about the aspect of the young peasant soldier.

He had rather the air of a man who knows his own responsibility and has accepted its consequences. He stood by the fireplace, on which some logs of beech wood were burning with a slow equable flame. Yvette had paused at the door, as if even at that moment she meditated flight. So dainty was her attitude that she irresistibly recalled some light bird poising itself to take wing. The Maréchal in his alcove stopped a moment in his dictation to look at her well pleased.

Yvette stood looking at Jean Cavalier a moment, as if weighing him in the balances of her mind. Then she went in and shut the door after her.

Cavalier watched her closely, but not as he had done in the houseplace of the Bon Chrétien. He beckoned her to come nearer.

"I would speak with you a moment," he said. "I may never thus meet with you again. You have gone by your choice out of my world. I am a young man, and (I tell you plainly) I never loved woman before. I never thought to love any woman—thus—till I saw you. I had consecrated myself to God and His service. I had (as I thought) brought the flesh into subjection. I had vowed and felt myself strong to pay—until the day I saw you."

He did not take his eyes from the girl's face. He spoke, not in angry denunciation, but with a certain resigned sadness, almost sweet in its intonation.

Yvette did not answer in words, but she did grow a shade paler as he continued. So much of grace was left to her.

"It is nothing to you—a man's love," he said, gently. "I might have known that. I ought to have known it. But that which was but the passing of an hour to you, my lady, was life, death, and all the hereafter to me!"

"Well, so be it," he went on; "my folly I would not see; in your light-heartedness you would not tell me. I have kissed your lips—there is no shame in speaking of that to you, I shall tell it to none other."

Yvette smiled. "I have told the only man who has a right to know," she said.

The young man's face fell a little. "I would rather have kept that as a secret between us two—our first and last," he said. "You might have left me *that!*"

She smiled again. "I did not mean my husband," she said.

"Who then?" cried the young man.

"My father!"

* * * * * *

"And now," Jean Cavalier went on, after a pause, "having tasted of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil that is within the garden, I must go outside where the Angel awaits me with the flaming sword that turns every way. I go back to La Cavalerie. I shall declare in the full assembly of the Brethren of the Way what my advice is. Having partaken of the feast, I will not be slack in paying the reckoning. In a week you shall hear from me. In a month I shall be able to tell you what proportion of our young men my influence can enlist under the banner of the King of France to fight his battles!"

Yvette Foy went up to him and took his hand. With a swift impulsive movement she lifted it to her lips.

"You are a thousand times better than I," she said. "Give God thanks for your escape from me."

The young man trembled from head to foot. He reached out his arms towards her, restrained himself by a violent effort, and let his hands fall by his side. Then he opened the door of the chamber in which their interview had passed, and went out almost blindly, stumbling on the threshold as he went.

Yvette followed him a little later. Her husband looked up quickly. She nodded.

"He has promised!" she said, in a low voice. De Montrevel whispered to the officer in attendance. He spoke a quick order through the little window at his elbow to a comrade without. The door was opened, and Jean Cavalier's interview was over. This time no bayonets were crossed before his breast. Muskets clanged on the pavement as the guard turned out. Swords flashed to the salute, and Jean Cavalier, the baker's boy of Geneva, took his way unchallenged into the darkness back to the little hill fortress of La Cavalerie. This time, however, he adventured forth without companion.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Days That Come Not Twice.

While Yvette Foy was playing her game for the faith and honour of the young chief of the Camisards within the entrenched village of La Cavalerie, on the opposite heights of the Causse Noir, among whose black rocks perch the turreted houses of Saint Veran, the three other principals of our history continued to lead a quiet existence.

The forces of the King were indeed all round them, but, as at La Cavalerie, they contented themselves with establishing a general blockade.

They had, indeed, experienced too many reverses at the hands of the daring peasantry to venture any more open attacks upon their strongholds. In addition to this their generalissimo, as we know, had strong hopes of another solution of the difficulty, and was directing all his energies towards securing that.

So in the meantime Saint Veran was left alone. Within the wide house of the old couple who had first entertained Flower-o'-the-Corn as an angel unawares, these three abode with vast content. They had all rolled far athwart the world, and therefore loved those days of peace and summer skies that sometimes surprise us in the midst of the grimmest winter weather.

All three of them had that rare gift of detachment

which often enables a man, and more rarely a woman, to enjoy the sunny to-day, letting the morrow take care of the things of itself.

Of course, even in Saint Veran, Maurice Raith was very far from being idle. With the assistance of Billy Marshall he organised the fighting forces of the village, erecting rough but strong forts among the scattered boulders, digging trenches across the narrow isthmus behind, and extending the defensible area on which the cattle and sheep of the villagers must subsist in time of closer siege.

As usual, Mr. Patrick Wellwood preached and prayed with the utmost acceptance. Never had such words of fire been heard in Saint Veran. And that curious congregation of militant Christians who came to morning and evening worship with swords by their sides and guns in their hands, listened with open ears (sometimes with mouths also) to the brief trenchant appeals, ringing like the trumpet-blasts which had carried Ardmillan's regiment into the battle, its chaplain charging first in the van after Sir Archibald himself.

And Flower-o'-the-Corn ?

Naturally she was more beautiful than ever. Something sweet, innocent, and sage disengaged itself like a perfume from her every look and action.

She and Maurice were by no means demonstrative lovers, and she sat most often beside the old man, her father, when he was not engaged in his ministrations among the poorer houses of Saint Veran.

It does not appear that at first they thought much of escape—at least, no reference to this appears in the records. Maurice had fulfilled his commission in carrying out the landing of stores and sending back a despatch, so he felt himself at liberty to await further

orders where he was—orders which in present circumstances would have some difficulty in reaching him.

Patrick Wellwood was happy wherever there was a soul to be saved, or a home into which to bring the Gospel of an affectionate presence and the sympathy of a Christian gentleman.

As for Frances—well, it was yet the first days of a new thing for her. She had found him whom her soul loved—and beyond that what is there more for any woman?

Much more, verily! But the very young (and the very much in love) do not think of it.

Only Billy Marshall and his wife Bet mourned and longed for the fleshpots of Keltonhill Fair. With a kind of second-sight the gipsy saw the long ranges of ragged "tans" scattered among the broom and whins, the larger tents for the drinking booths, the earthen "lean-to's," the gaily-caparisoned "cuddies" of the wandering tinker and the more staid saddle-bags of the packman's shelties.

He saw, he spake, and his soul longed exceedingly after them. Plans of escape floated indefinitely before his eyes, growing more and more impossible to be put behind him.

Since the cutting of the cable there had been no direct communication between the Camisards of the Causse Noir and those on the larger plateau of the Larzac.

"All well" signals, previously agreed upon, had been exchanged indeed, by means of blankets waved by day and bonfires lit by night. But these told little save that the brethren of the Way still held their own on one Causse and the other.

But it was obvious that all this could not last. Some day the King's other wars on his eastern and south-eastern frontiers would end. The released armies would

be poured over the Cevennes from all sides, the brave peasants exterminated or driven from the lands which had been their forefathers' before ever a Bourbon sat upon the throne of France.

So in the little room, which at night was the bedroom of Monsieur and Madame Montbeliard and in the daytime the general place of meeting of the family, including visitors, four friends were assembled talking over ways and means. In the window-seat, naturally a little apart, sat Maurice Raith and Flower-o'-the-Corn. Their semi-privacy was respected by all save the old minister, who saw no reason in the world why they should not listen all day and half the night to expositions of the shortcomings of the Revolution Settlement and the lack of firmness showed by the Kirk of Scotland on that momentous occasion. "The sin of sinful conformity"—"the inclusion of the Malignants"—"the payment of Cess to an Uncovenanted King"—these and similar phrases played a great part in his disquisitions. But there were alleviations. On such occasions Patrick Wellwood was accustomed to turn his eyes heavenwards as if seeking in the region of the stars confirmation of the Auchensaugh Covenanting, and in the meantime the corner of a shawl or the back of a chair did wonderful things in hiding the fact that Maurice Raith was holding the hand of his daughter Frances.

On this bleak and bitter February morning the snowflakes were swirling outside as if it had been the front of a Scottish March, while the ground was hard as iron underfoot. But there was a tender and sympathetic heart within that Saint Veran house—that of Madame Montbeliard. Soft and somewhat unwieldy in person, seldom moving from her chair except to superintend the cooking of a meal—in which it must

be owned she displayed an astonishing activity and directness of method, never weighing or measuring anything, but, like all born cooks, doing everything by rule of thumb and the inner light which is genius, Madame Montbeliard had conserved a little green plot in her heart, where Love still gambolled and made sport. Not for herself but for others was this "square of pleachéd green"—for never was matron more devoted to her bald and middle-aged husband. And now this pleasaunce belonged by right of trover to these agreeable young people, Maurice and Frances.

So among other good and kindly deeds, Madame Montbeliard undertook the task of diverting the stream of ecclesiastical instruction upon herself, and by dint of a French translation of an old Nuremburg Catechism (which had belonged to her father-in-law) she was able to propound a host of difficult questions, and even to obtain the reputation in the eyes of Patrick Wellwood of being "the most acute and subtle theologian—for a woman," he had ever met. And this was no small praise from a man who had so long lived in Geneva, where the very babes in long clothes lisp systems of divinity, and where outside the window of his mistress the orthodox lover sings to the night airs a psalm of Jean Cauvin instead of a chanson by that other very extraordinary Huguenot, M. Clement Marot.

Behind the friendly double curtain, then, Maurice Raith and Frances complaisantly pursued their own affairs, even as many others had done before them—and a few since. Their talk is no concern of ours. It was neither more learned, more extraordinary, nor more impersonal than the talk of lovers has been ever since the world began. It is not on the record—the words in the original Hebrew do not literally warrant the translation, but from the context it is evident that

Adam's first remark to Eve was, "What beautiful eyes you have!" To which she replied, dropping conscious lids, "Do you think so?"

And so shall it be so long as the wind bloweth where it listeth and the heart of man moveth within him aright.

Mainly, however, Maurice was telling Flower-o'-the-Corn about Raith—its old grey mansion house, the small-paned windows in the thickness of the wall which he would have enlarged for her drawing-room, the old-fashioned trimness of the clipped garden, the tall windy oaks and beeches of the rookery, from which at eve and morn all the year round there came a crying like the surf breaking on a sandy shore.

Meanwhile, upon the other side of the chamber, nearer to the fire (which these two young people had less need of), behold the theologians! A heavy baize curtain shut them off. So also did the massive proportions and exuberant morning-robe of good Madame Montbeliard. The Reverend Patrick was at the moment attacking a particularly knotty point—nothing less than the Nature and Attributes of the Saviour of men before the day of the wondrous Birth and the wonderment of certain shepherd folk in the Vale of Bread.

Patrick Wellwood spoke high and vehement as to a fellow-disputant of his own calibre—which in itself was no small compliment. Madame Montbeliard, her embroidery on her lap, spoke not at all, but only looked up and nodded good-humouredly at critical moments, or, made bold by immunity, intimated a dissent with a shake of her head or a questioning glance out of her black beady eyes.

Behind their screen the lovers spoke low, with clasped hands, leaning one toward the other like stooks of

corn in a harvest field. The loud sound of disputation reached Flower-o'-the-Corn through her half-closed eyes like the very clang and clatter of the rookery at Raith of which Maurice had just been telling her. She was wondering if, as he said, it should be her lot to have that cawing turmoil awake her in the dawns for the greater part of her life, and what she would be thinking of then.

A sharp knock came to the door. Flower-o'-the-Corn sat up suddenly with immense dignity. A blush vivid as a damask rose flooded her cheeks. The distance between herself and Maurice increased as imperceptibly and mysteriously as that which grows between the shore and a voyager gazing over the parting vessel's stern.

Upon Billy Marshall's entrance Maurice stood up with a quickly darkening brow. "What do you want here?" he said, with all the brusqueness of a lover whose *tête-à-tête* has been interrupted.

The gipsy saluted with his own slow self-respect, the true Galloway dourness, which passes not away with the centuries, and which strangers find so aggravating.

"Maister Maurice," he said, "I hae bode wi' ye as lang as Bet and me *can* bide. This year I maun be back on the Rhone-house braes by the day of Keltonhill, and Bet maun gang wi' me. Mickle sorrow wad I hae to leave behind me you an' the bonny doo there at your richt hand. I saw your twa heids closer thegither as I cam' up the street—an' 'deed, what for no? I mind weel when me an' Bet—ow, aye, I'll gang on wi' my story richt eneuch—gin your honour pleases——

* * * * * *

"Wi' than, the short an' the lang o't is, that I hae bidden here as lang as I am gaun to bide. If ye winna

let us gang, we wull juist hae to tak' the road wantin your honour's valued permission."

"Billy," said Maurice sternly, "that is not the way to speak to your superior officer!"

"Is't no?" inquired Billy, as one who asks for information. "Weel, that's a peety, too, for it's e'en the way I spak to my Cornel mony a year in the auld sax-an'-twentieth. An' what's guid eneuch for him will hae to do its dooms best to serve for you!"

The sudden fervour of Billy's tones interrupted the flow of controversial divinity by the fireside. The minister fixed Billy with his one steady eye and proceeded to scarify him from head to foot with the other, till the superstitious gipsy put up both hands before his face to shield him from the roving terror of the orb.

"Dinna, minister, dinna!" he cried; "pit a halter on't, for guid-sake. It's no canny to be lowse. I'll speak ye fair, an' the young man too—faithfully hae I served him, as he can testify; but Keltonhill Fair canna be missed anither year, neither for master nor man, general, captain, minister, Lord Marlborough nor Lord A'michty!"

"Wherefore do you speak of leaving this haven of rest and peace?" demanded the chaplain of Ardmillan's regiment.

"Ye may ask," said Billy, "and by the Lord, I'se no be slow in tellin' ye. Ye are a learned man, they tell me—did ye never hear tell o' Keltonhill Fair in your travels athwart the world?"

"It seemeth to me that I have heard the name," said the chaplain; "'tis one of those resorts of the profane and the ungodly which are, alas! too common in our native country, where vulgar drinking and more vulgar mirth take the place of that sobriety of walk

and conversation, which alone are in accord with the teachings of the Westminster divines as expressed in their Confession of Faith and Catechisms Larger and Shorter."

"There's some gye queer nuiks and corners i' Westminster, sir," said Billy, shaking his head; "I hae had my billet there—that was afore Bet cam' oot to me. Faith, an' ye haud up Westminster for an example o' sobriety, I'se back Keltonhill Fair again it ony day. Man, even the Tinkler's Knowe is a presbytery compared wi' it!"

"I spake not of the city of Westminster, the suburb of the great and Babylonish town of London," said the chaplain, "but of the venerable company of divines that for a time sojourned in that place and erected the most wonderful monument of human wisdom in the world."

"Na, na, minister," said Billy, "there ye are again mista'en——it's no at Westminster that the Moniment stan's, but awa' doon by the waterside at the place they caa' Billinsgate—an,' Lord, but the tongues o' the randies there are hard to bide. Hoosomever, Bet wasna wi' me, as I say—and, faith, Billy Marshall wasna blate at answerin' them back!"

"I fear we are doomed to misunderstand each other," said Mr. Wellwood, smiling. "But, as I take it, it is your desire to depart out of this place in order to be present at certain festivities in your own native country of Galloway."

"Dinna caa Keltonhill Fair a festeevity, man, as if it war just a kind o' Englishy Kirsmass, or a Sant's day like what ye micht see amang thae benichted haythen. Man, there's mair nor ten thoosend men, forbye weemen and bairns, no to speak o' common Eerish fowk there, and mair horses than wad reach to Johnny

Groats standing head to tail—and to caa Keltonhill a festeevity! Then the drink—man, ye canna gang the first sax mile in ony direction after the second day without sprachlin' ower drunk fowk at every third step—and to caa the like o' that a meeserable festeevity!"

Patrick Wellwood rose to his feet, and lifted his right hand high in the air with a solemn aspect. "I am with you," he said. "I had thought that I was called to remain and speak unto this people. But I see few in this place who are not prepared to die, whilst, if this be true which this poor ignorant man hath spoken, there remain depths of wickedness yet to be plumbed in mine own land. I have a call, it rings clear in my heart. I must go further, and preach the Word in other cities also. Yes, I will take my pilgrim staff in hand and overpass."

"What's your wull?" gasped the mystified Billy.

"I will preach the Gospel upon Keltonhill!"

Billy sprang completely off the ground, as if he had received a deadly shock. "The man's gaen gyte!" he cried. "Preach on Keltonhill! Man, it's mair nor your life's worth. Bide where ye are an' be hangit by King Louis—shot for a spy by the reprobate Banville doon ayont there, throw yoursel' into the sea aff the Co'en heuchs, but keep far aff frae Keltonhill in the time o' the fair. They are an awesome set, I'm telling ye, and if ye even prayed, let alane preachin', they wad cudgel ye to daith like a mad dowg!"

"I am not of those who count their lives dear unto them," said Patrick Wellwood. "If it be the will of the Lord I will company with you and preach the Gospel at Keltonhill."

Billy had gained a powerful ally. For Frances would not once have thought of opposing her father when the "call" came upon him.

Yet it was with something of sadness that she looked forward to the breaking up of their peaceful time in the little chamber of Saint Veran, built out like a swallow's nest over the abyss.

It was arranged that they should set out upon the following Monday. It was already Wednesday, and the intervening days were fully taken up with the necessary preparations. The route by Switzerland was chosen, both because Patrick Wellwood and his daughter knew it better (having already travelled it on their way thither), and also because a complete "Underground Railway" existed for sending persons and things in and out of the Cevennes.

On the Sabbath Patrick Wellwood preached what was understood to be his farewell sermon to the people of Saint Veran. His text was, "A city set upon a hill cannot be hid," and the preacher spoke of their little defenced town as a place where, like Moses on Sinai, he had seen the back parts of God; and again, like to Kadesh in the wilderness, from whose twice-smitten rock the water of life had flowed out.

"It may be," he said, "that it shall be yours to pass through the water and through the fire, but the same God who stilled the striving at Meribah and was as a flame of fire round about His people on Horeb, at the waters of the Red Sea, and by the brooks of Arnon, shall do so for your sakes, and more also. As there is given to me the gift of seeing, I declare to you that the persecutor shall not remain long in the midst of you. Yet a little and his hand shall be shortened! First, however, ye must be tried as by fire, yet ye shall come forth out of the furnace seven times heated as gold that is seven times refined. This is my last word, and fare ye well!"

Upon which there issued a sound of weeping through

all the congregation, women sobbing without restraint because of his declaration that he should never see them again, and never speak the Word of Life to them again. Even the cheeks of the men were not wholly dry.

Then he said, "Verily, hear what I speak. I have spoken but a few times to you, but there hath been given to me the message that is not mine own, and if ye will only do that which I have spoken unto you, ye too shall dwell peaceably in a peaceable land, wherein your souls shall be as well-watered gardens."

Then knew they all that he spake to them of Spirit Seguier, one of their number, who had been put to the death by torture by Du Chayla, the Inquisitor of the Cevennes.

And in a corner Frances Wellwood sat on a stool with Maurice Raith standing erect beside her. There were tears in the young man's eyes, because of his love and for those sweet first days that should be no more; and also, let us believe, because a woman may in such things make of a man what she will,—not, it may be, in the matter of belief, but certainly in conduct and the reverence which comes with sympathy.

These two went out together, and as they followed the dusky line of the Temple wall Flower-o'-the-Corn put her hand upon the young man's arm.

"Maurice, you have loved me here, where there are only poor common folk—these plain peasant women, but will it be the same when you are once again the favourite of my Lord Duke?"

"Frances!" cried the young man, aghast at something like the sound of a sob which he heard, "you cannot think it—you cannot dream it? Was I not my lord's secretary, almost his companion, before I ever set eyes on you? Did I ever love any woman as I have loved you?"

"You have told me so," said Flower-o'-the-Corn, with her face directed to the ground.

"Look up, little one," he said, earnestly; "look at me and tell me that you do not believe this thing. These are words and no more. Listen! I am a poor man —you will have a hundred offers from richer, better men than Maurice Raith. My patrimony is but a run for black-faced sheep. My castle is half-ruinous, only a few rooms in it are habitable. We shall be poor— that is, if you keep your promise and consent to share that poverty with me—yes, and with my dear Aunt Devorgil. She will be no charge to us, for she is of those who would say a blessing over a buttered parsnip —aye, more thankfully than many a lord over a Saint James' ordinary or a feast at the palace of the King!"

She smiled at him through a mist of tears.

"Well, love me—love me—only keep on loving me," she murmured. And after a silence she added, "*And do not get tired of telling me of it, please!*"

CHAPTER XXXIII.

The Resin-Gatherer's Hut.

But to leave Saint Veran was easier said than done. The Marquis de Montrevel was, indeed, an easy-going nobleman, and as a domestic man his ideas certainly did not err on the side of over-strictness. But, as a general, he had few rivals among the Marshals of France. He was persistent, calm, far-seeing, a dangerous adversary, a diplomat by nature, a tactician by habit and education.

That he knew of the presence of the two English envoys in the Camisard stronghold of Saint Veran on the cliffs of the Dourbie is more than probable, and this altogether apart from any information afforded to him by his wife. For Yvette Foy had her own (very curious) code of honour, and though she would work for the success of her husband's schemes with heart and soul, she had that in her which prevented her revealing the presence of Flower-o'-the-Corn in Saint Veran.

On the other hand, it was equally characteristic of De Montrevel that he should possess the information, that he should know that his wife possessed it, and yet never for a moment betray his knowledge by word or look.

There was under that bluff kindly exterior, behind that wary all-measuring eye with the twinkle coming

and going in it, the myriad wrinkles cross-hatched beneath it fine as those on the face of a meal-miller, concealed by the figure broad-set and vigorous as that of a merchant captain, a vast knowledge and a limitless experience of men and things. Without an atom of vanity the man was self-contained, sufficient unto himself and to his business.

It may be questioned if there was any one in France (save a certain lank and rapidly-growing lad, presently under the care of the Jesuits in the College Louis-le-Grand, Francois Marie Arouet by name, who afterwards was heard from in this world, and may possibly surprise many people in the next), who could more accurately sum up and settle the merits of the great and unparalleled sovereign under whom all Frenchmen lived, breathed, and had their being, than this same staunch, many-sided, much-enduring connoisseur in the good things of life, Nicholas de Baume, Marquis de Montrevel.

Almost sole among the men of his time he knew exactly what he wanted, and so ended by obtaining it. He did not, perhaps, aim very high, but then he generally overshot his own mark. Hence he did not suffer from disappointed ambition.

It was, he considered, a good thing to be a Marshal of France. It was a dignity worth retiring upon. Well, he had in his time paid court to favourites, and carried his weather-beaten visage and shrewd humorous twinkle into ladies' drawing-rooms. He had had a great familiarity with the lap-dogs of Madame de Montespan, and he knew the best bookbinders for missals in the time of her present more severe successor, Madame de Maintenon.

He had even taken service as a page in the early genial days of La Valière of the Velvet Eyes, and had

not failed to profit by the friendship of a woman who was glad to come across a brave and honest man among a crew of courtiers and sycophants.

So at the end of all Nicholas de Baume was, indeed, a Marshal of France. Now he could afford to let lap-dogs and Prayer-books alone. He had, it is true, been too long in putting down the rising in the heretic districts to please the present arbiter of France and disposer of the smiles of the King. The Marshal's bâton was the last favour he could reasonably expect, but in return for it he resolved to give the King a little parting surprise.

With the cross-gartered staff in his hand he could afford to marry the woman who pleased him, and also end the revolt in the Cevennes in his own way, without the edge of the dragoon's sword or the rattle of the State's artillery.

This, as he prophesied, would not greatly please Scarron's widow, nor the bigots of the long robe. But the thing would be done just the same.

It was in pursuance of this plan that a most careful watch was kept, not only upon the proceedings of Jean Cavalier in the main fortress of La Cavalerie, but also upon the much more innocent actions of three people of Scottish birth in the little swallow's nest among the cliffs of Saint Veran.

It is scarcely necessary to say that such a man as de Montrevel made few mistakes. Out of the Camisard district, the population generally was strongly Catholic. Spies were numerous, and generally their information could be depended upon. Only along one line were the Protestant families sufficiently numerous to pass the fugitives on from one station to another. This series of outposts followed the River Gardon till its junction with the Rhone valley, crossed the great river

at Aramon, swerved south towards Saint Remy, and then turned northwards again towards Grenoble and the foothills of the Alps.

Here the Protestants were (and are still) very numerous, and as the good Montbeliards had made every arrangement among their friends and correspondents, there seemed good hope that all the refugees would reach the Pays du Vaud in safety.

* * * * * *

It is in a country of shallow *étangs* (or in the Scots language "stanks") that we again come up with our friends. The company had made its way thus far without molestment. The Rhone had been crossed and lay behind, sunk in its wide shallow trench. Away to the right stretched the Mount of Victory, blue and faint, whence once on a time Marius looked down on Arles over the heaped bodies of the barbarians—men, women, children and dogs, all of whom had died fighting to the last gasp against the Roman legions.

The fierce mistral of the Rhone valley, which parches the body and even shrivels the immortal soul, had ceased blowing at dusk. And now, upon borrowed horses, Patrick Wellwood and his daughter were picking their way through the pine-woods and marshes of northern Provence, while the other three trudged afoot. Maurice led Flower-o'-the-Corn's beast in the tracks of their guide, who stalked ahead like an anxious heron. He was a long man, buttoned up in leathern garments, shining with dirt and grease, but he knew the ways alike in dark and light.

The horses which had belonged to Pierre the Waggoner of Roche-à-Bayard and Hoo stayed behind at Saint Veran. The good Montbeliards stedfastly

refused to receive them as a present, although urged thereto by Maurice Raith, whose intent it was to be generous at the expense of the Government of his native country.

"No," said the stout old Huguenot; "if the Lord continue His providences towards His own, and I am able to sell your horses to any advantage, be assured that I shall forward the price of them to the camp of my Lord Marlborough."

And even so the matter had to be left.

Now the great eastward-trending trough which extends from Aramon, where they had crossed the river, all the way to Saint Remy, was still at that time largely overgrown with pine-trees. The sole inhabitants of the district were a few charcoal-burners about Mailanne, while in the woods themselves there sojourned gatherers of resin, who tapped trees and caused the resin to flow into little vessels of burnt clay, so that the whole forest was filled with a sweet odour, healthy and bracing as the scent of the sea.

As they went Maurice and Frances conversed in a low tone. In the marshes far away the bittern boomed dully all unheeded, while in all the ditches, along whose banks they made their devious way, certain frogs, small and green as to their persons and optimist of disposition, croaked tentatively in the darkness, vaguely anticipant of spring.

Their guide had been supplied to them at their last halting-place, where he had agreed, in his soft liquid-sounding Provençal speech, to guide them safe to a resin-gatherer's hut at the north-eastern corner of those strangely splintered hills called the "Alpines," which, with their white stone pinnacles, glittered mysteriously under the starlight, or appeared yet more spectral as the late moon rose over them and cast a

grey reflection here and there through the openings of the forest upon the gloomy pools of the marsh lands.

Yet it was a not uncheerful time. The fugitives had left the doom-stricken Cevennes behind them. Only once, from a solitary eminence as they were crossing the rugged foothills of the Rhone volley south of Barbentane, they had seen behind them very far away, sunk low on the horizon like a water-logged ship on the sea-line, the rounded snow-whitened summits of the Camisard Causses.

So now, in another land and among a more cheerful people, with the rocks of Mont Majeur on one side, and the snowy steeps of Mont Ventour on the other, the travellers began to anticipate the fragrance of the true Alps. The sloe, the juniper, and the salicorne under their feet, the harsh and prickly samphire of the wastes —these they were leaving behind them—so, at least, they thought. Before them, across the Alpine passes, was the ploughed land and the fallow.

Soon the land of safety and of their own religion would be about them. Meantime, there was weariness of limb, and the prospect of rest and food in some resin-gatherer's hut on the flanks of the rocks of Baux.

That at least would be welcome, Frances thought—ah, never welcomer. For, in spite of Maurice Raith's sustaining hand, and his careful management of her slow-stepping beast, Flower-o'-the-Corn had grown deadly tired. And as the lantern in the hand of the guide turned a moment upon those behind, Maurice saw dark circles about her eyes.

"Not much farther—up there—in yonder cleft it lies!" averred the guide. "A good family—yes, a man and his wife, staunch upholders of the Way." They would soon find themselves there. They would

pile the twigs of pine and fragrant juniper, spread the blankets, and, after food partaken of, sleep out their sleep in quietness.

The man and woman came to their door. There was a red glow within, and a pleasant smell of roasting chestnuts disengaged itself upon the night air. Maurice lifted Frances Wellwood down. Indeed, she let herself slide into his arms like a tired child. His heart thrilled at her weary confidence. He carried her within, while at the door the guide was exchanging low-voiced Provençal with the resin-gatherer and his wife.

Patrick Wellwood, erect as at parade of his regiment, lifted up his hand and gave the Aaronic benediction without which he never entered any house, great or small. The three stayed a moment in their talk to regard him with eyes of half-frightened curiosity.

Wine, black bread, and the roasting chestnuts constituted the not ignoble fare upon which the little company of five made out their evening, or rather early morning meal. Soon the place was warm. Billy Marshall went foraging, and presently returned with an armful of roots of vine and olive, pine-cones, and twigs of dried juniper. About these the fire licked pleasantly, spitting and crackling. Maurice made Flower-o'-the-Corn drink a copious draught of the wine, which was good and strong, being from the neighbouring vineyards of Saint Remy.

Then they spread her couch, and Bet Marshall, with a crooning tenderness, covered her up. She was asleep in five minutes. Meantime Maurice sat by the fire and dozed, while Patrick Wellwood, vigorous and controversial as if he had just awakened from a dream of assisting at the Assembly of Divines at Westminster, expounded the great doctrine of justification by faith, with *excursus* upon Arius and Armenius, and delivered

as he went many deft back-handers at certain latitudinarian divines within the pale of the Kirk of Scotland as by law established—among whom one Principal Carstaires, unknown to Maurice even by name, came in for more than his share of buffets.

Nevertheless, Maurice nodded and agreed, his mind far away, and his eyes on the piled shawls in which his love lay muffled up on her couch of pine branches. Billy and Bet undisguisedly snored, while near the door the guide and the resin-gatherers murmured together, wakeful as Arabs about a camp fire.

The day came slowly. The little window of the hut changed gradually from dark slaty black to ruddy brown, the colour of a withered beech leaf. Then it grew brighter at the top till it resembled the rusty hue of a wall-flower.

Maurice slowly raised himself at the end of one of Patrick Wellwood's lengthiest paragraphs.

"I will see what the morning promises," he said. The minister nodded a little unwillingly. There were at least other three points into which he had not yet entered with sufficient fulness.

Maurice opened the door. There was a great flare of blood-red sunrise fronting him, with black figures silhouetted toweringly against it.

"Good morning, Anglais!" said a voice; "we have been waiting for you. Step this way. Our orders are not to disturb the lady."

The house of the resin-gatherer was surrounded by two companies of dragoons. The men were sitting their horses motionless as statues, and it was their figures which the eyes of Maurice, still blinking with the murk and smother of the chamber, had seen ink-black and tall against the splashed scarlet of the dawn.

Maurice, his intellect instantly clarified, stepped

without. He was too thorough a soldier not to recognise the hopelessness of resistance.

"Do you wish to bind me?" he said, holding out his wrists.

The officer in command smiled.

"I will risk taking your parole, M. le Capitaine de Raith!" his captor answered.

Maurice stared at the words.

"You know my name?" he asked, wonderingly.

"And all about you and your mission," said the French officer, "there are few things which are hidden long from M. le Maréchal—and what *he* does not know —'i faith, Madame le Maréchale is pretty sure to have light upon."

"Shall I call out my people?" Maurice went on.

The officer shrugged his shoulders.

"It is not my orders," he said; "we have plenty of time. I must wait till the lady wakes. The Marquis de Montrevel is a most considerate man—where ladies are concerned."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Yvette Drinks from Her Own Cup.

The Marshal's camp remained in the same rocky hollow, a little up the river from Millau, where he had received Jean Cavalier. The white house with the long garden in front was still his headquarters. M. de Montrevel smiled to himself over breakfast, which he took alone, as he thought how his arm had reached from the slopes of the Dourbie and the banks of the Tarn even to the white splintered peaks of the Alpines.

It was one of his foibles to pride himself (to himself) upon his omniscience. He had seen to it that Maurice Raith was well guarded in the company of Patrick Wellwood. Billy and his wife (Bet having proved rebellious), had been removed to a military prison, where they had leisure to declaim upon the lost delights of Keltonhill Fair for the benefit of their military gaolers—it is to be feared no little to the amusement and delight of these gentlemen.

Sole among the five prisoners of the resin-gatherers' hut Flower-o'-the-Corn found herself free, and an honoured guest in the house of the Marshal. It was, indeed, with a strong sense of repugnance that she first encountered Yvette. But the wife of the Maréchal de Montrevel was, after all, in a different position—so, at least, thought Frances Wellwood—from Yvette Foy, of the little hill-village of La Cavalerie,

with nothing to do—save, as it were, to seek whom she might devour.

Flower-o'-the-Corn still believed that when a woman marries she changes her nature. The flirt is no more a flirt. The cat with the claws that scratch becomes Puss in Boots, and a fit chaperone for any young unmarried female.

It was, therefore, with some sympathy that Flower-o'-the-Corn received Yvette's explanation, how the arrest was not her husband's act—De Montrevel would gladly have let them go—how indeed, though fully aware of their presence, he had permitted them to depart out of his own Commanderie of the High Cevennes.

But now that they had been captured and brought back by the dragoons of his enemy de Banville, directed by some unknown spy domiciled in Saint Veran, what could he do? They must wait. There were grave intrigues in progress against her husband, affecting his command and his very life. If he were to allow prisoners to escape at this time, especially Patrick Wellwood and the young English envoy, the results would be most serious.

With her lips to Flower-o'-the-Corn's ear she revealed, however, that it was possible—the secret was one which must not be so much as breathed, as she valued the lives of her companions—that this dreadful war of religion, which had so long desolated the country, would be brought to an end, and that in the happiest fashion. But, above all things, this must not be breathed—not to M. le Capitaine Raith—not even to her father. It must be a secret between themselves. The Marquis would never forgive her if he knew. And so on, ending in feminine fashion with an embrace. For Flower-o'-the-Corn was by nature forgiving, and she had not forgotten how at the great cradle-cairn of

Saint Veran, where the Cadets of the Cross captured her, Yvette Foy had saved more than her life.

So it came to pass that, with some appearance of permanency, the fugitives found themselves detained in the camp of the Marshal de Montrevel, while Jean Cavalier was performing, or endeavouring to perform, his promise of bringing the rebel Camisards over to the side of the King.

As to their unexpected capture in the Rhone valley, the Marquis had indeed allowed them to get far beyond his immediate jurisdiction before arresting them (though he might very well have done so in the Valley of the Dourbie itself), because he did not wish that the bruit of the event should interfere with the success of his projects of pacification or with the recruiting of the promised Camisard regiments by Jean Cavalier.

So it happened that there came a new influence, a gracious presence, into the house of Nicholas de Baume, Marquis de Montrevel. Wise about other matters, he was singularly and, as one might say, shrewdly ignorant about women. Like all men who, having lost their mothers in childhood, have known few good women since, he was under the belief that experience of many women can take the place of the knowledge of one.

As to Flower-o'the-Corn, she knew well that the lives of those dearest to her depended largely upon the impression she might make upon the notable Commander-in-Chief of the High Cevennes. And so, thinking no evil, desiring all good, she set a smiling face to the difficult task of obtaining the release of Captain Maurice Raith and her father, Patrick Wellwood, late chaplain in Ardmillan's regiment.

To accomplish her purpose was naturally an impossibility at once, but she speedily obtained a

considerable alleviation of their condition, and after a time she was allowed so much liberty of intercourse with them that their position as prisoners became, in all but the fact of confinement within fixed bounds, almost purely nominal.

So far everything went well.

But the all-observant eyes of the Maréchal de Montrevel, as he came upon the girls—morning, noon, and night, as they sat at their reading, their broidery, or in the intimate converse of ladies over the afternoon dish of tea—distinguished very clearly, all too clearly indeed, the clever woman of the world from the innocent, refined, and accomplished girl. It had been his boast that he had chosen the woman who suited him. And doubtless to a great extent this was true. It was certainly true when the boast was first made—for Yvette's quickness of wit, her readiness of resort and retort, amused and pleased the old *gaillard*, whose palate was spoiled for simpler household dishes.

But, dimly at first, he began to see that life could not be lived as at a cabaret, amid clinking glasses and riotous toasts, and that the comrade of a lifetime is not she who can recount the liveliest tales or engage at point-device of words with a dozen men at a time. Only, having been a soldier and a bachelor all his life, his sole outlook the camp, the barracks, and the battle-field, Nicholas de Baume had never had the opportunity to observe intimately any type of womanhood higher than the clever maid-of-honour of some wandering princess *in partibus*. In comparison with such, Yvette Foy appeared to him an even greater wonder than she really was.

There was something wanting in his wife, of which his heart took due cognisance. The sweet and unspoilt nature of the girl Frances Wellwood, her frank

unconsciousness of admiration, the reproof to all freedom of language or action which her mere coming into a room seemed to enforce with the authority of a royal command, moved the grim-humorous, hard-bitten old warrior like a glimpse of a paradise from which all his life he had been shut out.

All this might have had no ill effects—might even have passed unnoticed had it not been for one thing —Yvette Foy had grown to love her husband.

Yes, it is strange to think upon—but such is the nature of woman. The woman who had played with Love as a cat plays with a mouse—she who could not let one man, however insignificant, slip through her fingers if she could help it—she who held that the end justified the means in carrying out her husband's plans, now all suddenly became jealous as a young girl in the crisis of her first love affair.

It was upon the eve of the day on which Frances had obtained from the Marshal the promise that, subject to the King's ratification, he would liberate his prisoners immediately on the conclusion of peace in the Cevennes, that Yvette showed the first symptom of the coming trouble.

The condition of Patrick and Maurice had been rendered as comfortable as possible. They were supplied with food from the Marshal's own table. That day Flower-o'-the-Corn had been permitted to convey the good news to them herself, and to hold an hour-long conversation with her friends in the presence of one of de Montrevel's officers. Consequently, her anxiety being greatly abated, she was in the best of spirits upon her return, and several times she smiled to herself as she thought of the excellent opportunity of acquiring Church history and systematic theology which her lover was at present enjoying. It is to be feared that

she did not give quite the same amount of consideration to the yet sadder case of Billy Marshall and his wife Bet immured in the military prison and shut off from the prospective delights of Keltonhill Fair.

Anything so bright and charming as Frances Wellwood the old Marshal thought he had never seen. While the Marquis sat watching her, she told the history of her day with spirit, and thanked him again and again for all he had done. So over-running was her delight that she failed to notice the darkening brows and unwonted silences of Yvette, who, unused to having her husband's eyes fixed on any but herself, had begun to harbour the darkest thoughts of her sometime friend.

So accustomed was Yvette to carry off the affections of men, as it were *vi et armis*, that she could not believe that every other woman, to whom the power was given, would not do the same. In fact, she held for truth the children's proverb, "As you would do yourself, so you dread your neighbour!"

And the clear blue eyes of Flower-o'-the-Corn, her rippling hair, ruddy yellow like ripe wheat, her tall and graceful form, at once girlish and full of the vigour of the prime, made her, in Yvette's eyes, a neighbour to be dreaded indeed.

At the time there was little said. Only the gay talk in which the Maréchale de Montrevel was wont to take a leading part was transformed into a *tête-à-tête* between the old soldier and his fair young guest. She spoke of the Low Countries, where the Marquis had never been, of Marlborough and the Prince Eugene—whom the Marshal remembered as a slim young lad, the laughing-stock of Paris, with the long lashes of a girl and the overweening conceit of himself, which was his inheritance as a Savoyard.

Then the converse slid off into other channels. The Marquis looked across at his bâton.

"Ah," he sighed, meditatively, "that is my last plaything. I have gotten it just in time. As it stands, it is a marvel. For I have not the modern qualifications. My mother was an honest woman!"

Now by all the rules Yvette should have smiled, for the remark was quite in her own vein. Since it was obvious that the Marshal meant only to glance, as it were, over his shoulder, at my Lords the Duke of Berwick, the Prince Eugene, the Duke of Maine, and the Count of Toulouse.

But something selective in the sympathy of the glance which her husband sent across the table to Frances Wellwood stirred all the latent bitterness in the heart of Yvette.

She rose tempestuously, while Frances (who with her fresh English ignorance had not caught the illusion) was still smiling a little uncertainly.

"I presume," she said, turning bitterly to her husband, "you mean that allusion for me. Well, listen to this, Monsieur le Marquis. I am not your mother, but you have made me your wife. If I am not honest enough for you and your friends, I am at least entirely ready to leave you to your honest women!"

The outbreak came upon her two companions as a bolt from the blue. With all his boasted experience of women, all his study of character, the Marquis was taken as completely by surprise as Frances herself, who on her part paled slowly to the lips as the sound of Yvette's voice carried first consternation and then fear to her heart.

She rose to her feet uncertainly, putting out her hands towards her friend:

"What is it?—What is it?—What have I done?" she stammered, "Tell me!"

But by this time Yvette was on her way to the door. She swept Frances out of her path, thrusting her from her with fierce anger.

"Out of my way, serpent!" she cried, furiously; "do you not think I have seen it—all your affectation of innocence, your lifted eyelids, your 'Can you tell me this?' 'Will you help me in that?' Oh, I know you, and such as you, root and branch I know you! You have striven to rob me—to steal my husband from me. But you shall not succeed—no—by all the powers of evil you shall not! For as God lives, I will kill you both first!"

And she broke into a sort of dry tearless sobbing, like a man's weeping, infinitely painful to hear.

For this day Yvette Foy was beginning to reap that which she had sown, and she was but little inclined to relish the harvest.

The Marquis had risen also, but more slowly, his brows bent, his lips compressed. He appeared to be resolving within him what course to take. He did not speak, but advanced towards his wife, and led her out of the room. Then the door was shut, and in the guest chamber, now strangely altered, Flower-o'-the-Corn was left alone. She sat, white and much afraid, listening to the murmur of voices, the dull gruff rumble which was that of the man, and the keen piercing note of the angry woman, which at times reached almost to a hysterical shriek.

To Frances, thus trembling, there entered all unexpectedly a spruce young officer—Count Edouard de Nayve, a Gascon, of the hottest blood of the fiery province, and also of that readiness to make love upon all occasions which is supposed to be *de rigeur* in the junior ranks of the French service.

It chanced that at the moment of the young man's

entrance the Marquis prevailed upon his wife to leave the ante-room for her own chamber, whither he followed her immediately. The sound of their voices sank to a murmur, heard only at intervals.

Then, eager to profit by his supposed opportunity, the young officer poured his compliments with boyish persistency into the ears of Flower-o'-the-Corn. Never was the irony of fate greater. So intent was Frances on what was passing in the next room that she dared hardly to breathe. Yet, in order to distract the young man's attention from the sounds which came through the partition, she had perforce to answer, and even in some ghastly fashion to entertain him with smiling patience. Then as the moments fled away and neither of her entertainers returned, her imagination began to play strange pranks. She saw all the favours she had so painfully won reft from her—the lives of her father and of her lover in greater danger than ever. And all through her thoughtless carelessness.

Yet after all what had she done? Her conscience being carefully examined, could charge her with nothing. And Yvette, of all women!—Poor Flower-o'-the-Corn, she did not know that it is ever thus. None are so jealous as the Yvette Foys who have sported with other hearts till they believed that they had none of their own.

For Love maltreated, Love neglected, or Love scorned always pays his debt in kind.

CHAPTER XXXV.

The Fine Gold Grown Dim.

Meanwhile, high up among the hills of the Cevennes, Jean Cavalier, with a sad heart, was striving to carry out his bargain with the Maréchal de Montrevel. The young man had definitely convinced himself that no good could come of continued resistance. The advent of Yvette Foy into his life had meant this to him. It had robbed him of his belief in that ready personal help from the Highest, which he had been so ready to invoke.

Aforetime he had served in the temple. He walked, like Aaron the High Priest, within the inner shrine. The Holiest of All was open to him, not once a year, but from day to day. He, with his living eyes, had beheld the mysterious light which awaits the seeing faithful eye, the Shekinah brooding between the outstretched wings above the mercy-seat.

Adept of the holy things, the table of bread was laid for him. The light of the seven-branched candlestick, the smoking altars of high sacrifice, were ordinary parts of his life. God was at his right hand and his left. He led his peasants to battle with an absolute faith in the success of their cause. Unseen, the God they worshipped, and whose prophet was Jean Cavalier, scattered His lightnings in their van. They must conquer — the very powers of hell could not prevail.

As on the Red Sea's shore, the pillar of fire was a wall betwixt the chosen and their foes.

But all was suddenly changed. The man who had worn the white priest robes became even as other men. Urim and Thummin lost their mystic light. Being handled they gave forth no message. The ephod was stained with common clay. The phylactery on which had been written, "*Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul and with all thy might*," was torn from its place and scrabbled over with impious impish blasphemies.

Jehovah, the God of the right hand and of the left, Jehovah-nissi, the Lord-my-banner, removed himself beyond the farthest stars. The thunder by which He had spoken, the lightning in which He made Himself visible, became mere noise and flame—these only and nothing more.

But the man's eyes were opened. It was not perhaps well that it should be so, but it was inevitable. His Eve—Yvette that is, a lesser, younger Eve, though not less serpent-beguiled—had given him of the fruit of the tree of knowledge, and he had eaten.

So the man awoke, knowing himself for naked. As for the woman, she had been awake of a long season.

No more was his Sabbath a day of Holy Convocation. The bells and pomegranates of his office no longer sounded in Jean Cavalier's ears as he went into the place of sacrifice. Dim grew the fine gold on which was written, like the engraving of a signet, the motto :—

HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD.

It was a mockery upon a brow which (so he thought within him) ought rather to have been defiled with dust and ashes. The Leader of the Host never walked

in the green fields to meditate any more. The still small voice within him was silent. Even his conscience was seared.

Instead of the soul like a well-watered garden of his friend Spirit Seguier, Jean Cavalier's earth was brass, his heaven iron.

And it was in this hopeless spirit that he went to call the Cevenols to arms in a new and strange cause.

But the fruit of the tree of knowledge had done its work. The man saw clearly—oh, so clearly. Without glamour, without perspective, pitilessly, logically, remorselessly, all that he had been, all that he had become, were borne in upon him.

It was on the eve of the Sabbath day. The first touch of spring had come to the high lands of the Causse. With a soft southerly-breathing wind it came, that set the birds singing on the leafless willows and shivering poplars, and sent even a stray humble-bee or two, large and purple, booming overhead—rare wanderers from the favoured plains beneath.

In their Temple the Camisards of La Cavalerie were gathered together to hear the message of their leader. It was understood that he had a weighty word to speak. He had been seen night and day wandering on the bare scalp of the Larzac, his eye fixed, his lips moving, evidently in solitary communion. He had even avoided the morning service of the sanctuary and, being the man he was, his wish to be left alone had been religiously respected.

When he entered the village the people looked furtively at him—the prophet of God—as if they expected to see his face mystically suffused, like that of Moses when he came down from the Mount.

It was in this, the ancient hall of the Templars, that the faithful were gathered to hear their leader's

message. It has long been destroyed, but at Les Baux, among the splintered peaks of the Alpines, an almost exact *replica* may still be seen. Low, vaulted with enormous arches, its plan seemingly taken from those Byzantine churches with which the warrior monks had been familiar in the East, it was yet a perfect hall of assembly.

It was known that the prophet and chief would open his mind to the Brethren that night. They had marked his frequent absences. They had seen him stray, lonely and brooding, over the barren Causses. God was surely wrestling with him. So they held in their simple faith.

They were the Camisards, the striving, faithful remnant—this young man had been sent to them by God. To doubt him was an impossibility. There had never been a traitor among them. As they had lived, even so they had died. The rack, the cord, the fire, the breaking on the wheel, had not been able to move them. Old men of seventy and girls of sixteen, shamelessly martyred with the tortures of demons, had died even as Spirit Seguier. The Camisards loved Jean Cavalier, and there was no fear in their love.

So they gathered joyfully, every man of them able to bear sword or shoot musket. A remarkable congregation it was. There in the gloomy hall of the Templars stood tanned weather-beaten shepherds of the Causses, each with his great mantle of sheepskin about him, clod-stained cultivators of a stubborn soil, hardy planters of vines upon terraces which they themselves had hewed out upon the Dourbie-side, gaunt dwellers among the ultimate rocks in that grim phantom city which the shepherds call Montpellier the Old—not one of them unhardened by toil and privation, or with an eye unlighted by that lofty personal religion which,

according to circumstances, makes of a man a martyr, a fanatic, or a saint.

There were men there whose heads might have been those of sculptured confessors of the doctrine catholic on some cathedral wall—men who for any belief would have taken joyfully the spoiling of their goods—men again who might have crouched by an Indian temple wall with the begging-bowl of the faquir.

But in the far background near the door were two men standing together, dark-browed, grim, silent, waiting in the shadow of a pillar ornamented with the arms of the Knights Templar, who alone of all that assembly carried suspicion in their hearts. And these men were Abdias Maurel, called Catinat the Prophet, and—Martin Foy, whose house of the Bon Chrétien had been left unto him desolate.

There ensued a silence, the silence which falls upon many people who wait, scarce breathing for that which shall be.

Jean Cavalier entered.

A sighing rustle followed—the turning of every head in his direction.

Jean Cavalier was paler, more haggard than we have yet seen him. The freshness of boyhood was gone from his cheeks. Even his eye no longer sought, with its old clear frankness, the faces of the people over whom he had ruled with an authority almost royal. Yet the Camisards of the Larzac found nothing unusual in this changed aspect. The heat of the spirit within, the Divine conflicts, the all-night wrestlings were bound (so they thought) to make their mark upon any man, especially upon one so young. Their prophet must not be one who clothed himself in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day. Now locusts and wild honey are a fine diet, exceedingly

suitable for prophets dwelling in the wilderness, but at best they cannot be called fattening.

So the Folk of the Way marked their leader with special approval as he stood before them. Thus, and not otherwise, should one look who mediated between the ignorance of the people, and the All-Wisdom who shrouded Himself in flame, thick darkness, and the voice of thunderings on the Mount that might not be touched.

Hush! He is beginning. Pulses beat faster. There were wet eyes, tear-furrowed cheeks—aye, though there were no women in that throng, but only men of age, arm-bearing, good soldiers of Jesus Christ and the Church of the Deliverance.

Hush then! Listen for the word from the mouth of him that is able to declare it. Not a doubt, not a fear! Now, at last, the Way shall be clear before their feet. The rough places shall be made plain. Fear not at all, little flock on the ultimate mountains, it is your Father's goodwill to give you the kingdom —and who but this man is the Moses that shall guide you to the land of promise?

There was the opening of a door while Jean Cavalier stood there. A gust of chilling wind blew on and extinguished some of the candles and resinous torches in the window-niches.

"Hush! He is beginning!"

Only in the shadow of the great Samson-pillar, with the Templar arms upon it, Abdias Maurel, *dit* Catinat, the old soldier of the Way, set his lips more grimly, thinking that now at last his hour was come.

And in the yet deeper shade, like a tigress robbed of her cub, Martin Foy narrowed his eyelids and gritted his teeth. His hand was on his dagger, and he moved it to and fro in the sheath.

Jean Cavalier lifted his hand, and drew it wearily across his brow. He dropped it again and began to speak.

"People of the Way," he said, slowly, and with visible effort, "there are dark things in my heart this night." (At this dubious preface Martin Foy looked significantly across to Catinat.) "The cup which God hath given us to drink has been mingled of honey and gall. The honey ye have eaten. It hath been sweet under your tongue. That which remains is gall——"

("Aye," murmured Catinat, under his breath, so that only Martin Foy heard him, "he says true—the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity!")

The landlord of the Bon Chrétien did not answer. He did not once remove his eyes from the young man's face. Only he continued slowly to draw his dagger out of its sheath, letting it slip back with the ominous click of perfectly-fitting steel.

Jean Cavalier went on, with a certain heavy and determinate conscientiousness.

"I will speak to you clearly—the thing which God hath given me the power to see. And the truth is this: *God hath forgotten to be gracious.* He hath withdrawn His hand from us, in that we have striven against the man whom He has made king—even the Lord's anointed——"

There was a moment of stupefied astonishment. Could this be, indeed, the Divine Oracle for which they had been waiting? An ominous murmur arose.

"Not against the King, but against the priests we have fought, the persecutors, the murderers of the Elect!"

"Yes—against the King, and none other!" cried Cavalier, raising his voice. "I have said it. So it is. Long we have shut our eyes. Long we have striven against those set in authority over us and have not

repented. So God hath departed from us. From me I know that He has set Himself afar off."

("That may well be!" muttered Catinat, very grimly. "He will set Himself yet farther from every sinner.")

"Hearken," Cavalier went on, while a kind of stupefied silence filled the hall, and for very fear no man communed with his neighbour, "I did not come hither to tell you this alone. I have had a message from the King. You declare with the lips that you are loyal—well, let us prove whether this be so or no. His Majesty King Louis of France——"

"God send both your souls to deepest hell!" the deep voice of Catinat boomed through the hall of the Templars like the bittern over the marshes. And from its sheath the click of Martin Foy's dagger said a crisp "Amen"!

"Nay," said Cavalier, "his is not the fault, but that of his evil councillors. To-day the King offers us terms—the ending of the wars, the ceasing of the persecution, the free exercise of our religion—that is, in private!"

"And in return?" cried Catinat, the bitterness of his opposition masked, for the moment by a smiling countenance.

Cavalier blushed a vivid crimson.

"In return," he said slowly, as a child says a lesson it has imperfectly learned, "we of the Cevennes are to do as other portions of his dominions have done. We are to raise one or more regiments of young men in order to fight the King's battles in foreign parts. For that he will grant us peace. The conditions are not hard. This is the message I have from Louis, King of France. This is the word that hath lain heavy on my heart, which I have now declared

to you. Brethren of the Way, what answer shall I give?"

With one fierce rush forward, Catinat was on the platform. Martin Foy made a slight movement as if to follow him, but finally withdrew himself deeper into the shadow of the great pillar, watching out of the gloom with eyes in which the red light gleamed and danced.

"And this," the Prophet Catinat cried, "is the end! This is the sword that was sharpened, the sword of the Lord and of Gideon! Lo! It is whetted—not to defend the faith, but to fight the battles of the son of perdition, of the husband of Scarron's widow. Against our own brethren, the Cevenols must draw the sword—and at the bidding of a traitor, a renegade, an officer of the King, whose commission is in his pocket at this moment!"

At the challenge direct Jean Cavalier came forward. He was more calm than he had been when he began. There was almost a smile on his face, the fighting smile with which (his men said) he was wont to enter battle. He undid the belt and sword with which the leaders of the Camisards had solemnly invested him, and flung the weight of iron and embossed leather on the table with a clang.

"There," he cried, "freely I give up that command which I did not ask. I will no longer be your leader. I am only one of yourselves. I have faithfully delivered my message. I see that for us there is no help save in yielding ourselves to the arm of flesh—even as Jeremiah advised when the Assyrian came down from the north, a strong nation and a cruel, pressing upon Israel on every side. It is marvellous in our eyes, but it is the Lord's doing for all that. The princes of the people cried for help from Egypt. But the prophet knew Egypt to be but a bruised reed.

And so say I of England and the allies. They will not help us. After all, are we not Frenchmen, and no rebels? We rose to defend our rights. These will now be granted to us, for the King has been misled concerning us. Wicked men had been about him, blinding him. Evil women have spoken to our hurt. Who, therefore, will go out with me this day to fight the battles of the King of France?"

There was a dead silence. Even Catinat did not answer. He stood back, like one who gives his enemy a long rope and every advantage. Truly Catinat knew that the Angel of Jean Cavalier had departed from him.

Yet in one thing he had underrated the influence of his adversary. There were of the younger men not a few to whom Jean Cavalier was still as a god, men who had grown weary of the long confinement among their own bleak hills, especially since the raids and forays had been given up. These had not the older men's religious enthusiasms. They loved not preachings, or long prayings, and their hearts leaped up at the mere thought of the long *t-r-r-r-r* of the kettle-drum and the stirring notes of the trumpet. Some of these had made it their custom to steal out to the base of the old cradle staff of Saint Veran, that they might listen to the merry marching strains which came up from the valley, as guards were set for the night, or the dragoon regiments rode home two and two along the Dourbie-side, jingling bridles and clinking scabbards in the pride of their accoutrement.

For very envy, they might indeed take a shot at the soldiers from behind a boulder, or with the musket-barrel laid along a low rock barrier, but there was not a man who would not rather have taken the risk of marching with the troops (with the added certainty of hell-fire afterwards), than have gone back to the

same old round of duty and prayer and preaching, and preaching and prayer and duty, in La Cavalerie upon the Causse of Larzac.

So all shamefaced and sullen, but in the main determinedly, one here and another there stood up and gave in his unpopular adhesion. "I will come with you, Jean Cavalier!" or "I will stand by you, Jean Cavalier!"

But they were few. The Camisards were mostly not young men. The young lay under green mounds here and there on both sides of the bare wind-swept Cevennes. Cavalier's recruits numbered perhaps a dozen in all, and Catinat waited. He would take no advantage. Jean Cavalier had ousted him fairly at the first. So not unfairly would he fight for the mastery, now that the hour of his triumph was so near.

"And now, Brethren of the Way," cried Catinat, after a long pause, during which every man looked askance at his neighbour, "ye have heard this man pervert judgment with words, what say ye? Ye have heard these also—young men without wisdom, in whom the weight of the Word is not. Will ye enrol your names with theirs and go forth to fight the battles of King Louis against our brethren—men of one faith with us, whose ministers have spoken the Gospel in our ears, whose messengers have brought munitions of wars into this very place?"

Cavalier came forward as if he would have interrupted, but Catinat waved him aside.

"My turn!" he cried; "ye have spoken and may again. But now the word is with me! Yet let us demand of him, Brethren of the Way, wherefore he has done this. It is our right to know. It is not a message from God. It is no sign that he hath seen. What then? I can tell you, brethren. His holy

revelation is the promise of the King that Jean Cavalier should have the command of as many men as he can raise among us. The blessed sign is the commission given him by our enemy and persecutor, the Marquis de Montrevel, which he carries in his pocket. Let him deny it if he can. I have spoken!"

By this time the Camisards were for the most part upon their feet, and the old hall of the Templars, already obscured with the reek and flare of torches and the dim winking of guttering candles, was one confused tumult of angry men and fierce shoutings.

And in the midst of the turmoil one man, dark of face and with grey hair that drooped in a heavy fell over his brow, who had been standing in the shadow of the great pillar by the door, moved a little nearer the platform.

"For the last time I appeal to you, brethren," cried Cavalier; "listen to me. Have I ever led you wrong? Have I ever asked aught from you for myself?"

"No, you have asked it rather of the King's High Majesty," retorted Catinat; "for us, we ask nothing from Louis of Bourbon but what he has given our fathers and our brothers—the gallows and the rack. Take your commission and go. You are not of us! Go forth, traitor and spy!"

And through the hall and up from the crowded mass of Camisards which surged beneath came the hoarse threatening murmur, "He is not of us—he is not of us!"

"One day you shall know I have spoken truth!" cried Cavalier, above the tumult; "when your valleys are swept with the fire and the sword—in that day you will acknowledge that I have spoken among you the word of truth and soberness."

"Go—go!" they cried, hoarsely; "go and take

your half-score of branded traitors with you! Perhaps you yourself will come back in the King's uniform to burn our houses and drag us to the rack!"

"You do me wrong," said Cavalier, "grievous wrong! I have never sought aught but your good. For the last time hearken ye. Men of the Way, if any have a quarrel against me, let him stand forth and declare it, face to face. I stand here among you defenceless. If I have deceived any—done evil to any, here is my breast—let him strike and spare not!"

Then the man with the matted mass of hair, falling badger-grey and dank over his eyes, tossed it aside that he might see the better, as he leaped on the platform, with the muttering growl of a wild beast.

"*I* am here!" he shouted. A dagger flashed a moment in the smoky glare.

There was a great crying—a frightened surge of men. Catinat stepped forward and received in his arms the body of Jean Cavalier. The dagger was deep sunk in his shoulder.

His assailant plucked it out again by main force.

"He hath stolen my daughter—sunk her soul into the lowest hell!" cried Martin Foy, holding the knife aloft. "It was for her sake that he betrayed the Lord. Have I done right, Brethren of the Way?"

And with a mighty surging roar, hoarse as the anger of the sea when the breakers fall on the pebbles, came back the answer, "*Right thou hast done, Martin Foy!*"

CHAPTER XXXVI.

Gathering Up the Fragments.

Yet was not Jean Cavalier dead, nor yet to the common eye Yvette Foy dishonoured. But since Martin Foy thought so, the popular voice mattered singularly little.

Yet there was, for the time being, an end to the Marshal's well-laid plans for the pacification of the Cevennes. Cavalier was laid by the heels, and the raising of the Camisard regiments for the King's foreign service, which were to drain off the rebellious elements, seemed now farther off than ever.

In his own hired house, Catinat tended his sometime rival, with the same care, wherewith a prison surgeon might nurse and cosset a wounded malefactor for the gallows. His wound, if not dangerous, was undoubtedly severe. Time was needed, a long time, and Catinat saw to it that recovery was not hastened. In the present state of affairs he could not afford to lose sight of such a charge.

And Cavalier, now tossing in fever, now shaking like a leaf with ague contracted in nights of exposure, saw visions and dreamed dreams. As often as he closed his eyes he rode out upon immeasurable leagues of billowy nothingness, while before him fled, like a tempting fiend, smiling subtly, the shade of the woman whom for certain fevered months he had loved, or

seemed to love. Then, in an instant, all was dissolved. He came out upon the face of Very God! The clouds that had sustained him vanished at the breath of His nostrils, and Cavalier felt himself falling, falling, spinning like a top, faster—faster—ever faster—down—down—into the Pit!

He woke with a shriek, and there, his lips grave and the eyes inexorable as the Law, stood Catinat, bending over him, grimly tender, in his hand the *tisane* of the moment, or mayhap a poultice of herbs for the yet green wound.

"The soul that sinneth, it shall die, saith the Lord," was the awakening word of the faithful Catinat to his charge; "nevertheless, take thy *tisane*—it may be that by humiliation and prayer thine iniquity shall not be unto death."

"It *is* unto death," responded Jean Cavalier, turning his face to the wall.

The nurse said no other word, nor offered any further cheering or hopeful message. But as he went out of the door he muttered, "Hast thou children—then bow down their neck from their youth."

Then he cast one look back upon the young man as he lay straight and slender on the bed. "After all, who knows?" Catinat would murmur; "he is but a boy. 'Wine and women make even men of understanding to fall away,' saith the wise man, even Jesus, the son of Sirach. And as it is found in the same author, 'Who shall touch pitch and not be defiled?' Moreover, let it be remembered that he is but a boy. I will see to it that he doth not recover too quickly. For a flame once kindled among young men is not easily put out."

Catinat had gone many times to the house of Martin Foy, but his seeking for his ancient friend was in vain.

With the scene in the old hall of the Templars and the approbation of his bloody vengeance by his Brethren of the Way, he had vanished. He was seen no more in La Cavalerie. The Bon Chrétien itself was left to the care of servants and hostelers, who camped upon Yvette's embroidered tapestries, torn from the wall, and left the print of their tankards upon the white damask, fine as that of a queen, with which she had been delighted to plenish her *armoires*.

As for Martin Foy, he was elsewhere, not self-slain, as many of the people thought. His time was not yet. The man's Calvinism had taken the austere Old Testament form, mixed, too, with some of that latent insanity which never marches very far from such as he. "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth," became his motto. Nor did he greatly care to distinguish whose eye and tooth were to square the account.

But now among the Camisards of La Cavalerie there was no leader but Catinat. The accepted policy was the one of resistance to the uttermost, a counsel of despair indeed. But in the bitter disappointment of their mood at the failure of their heaven-born leader, nothing else had any chance of being listened to. The Camisard country became irreclaimable. Dumbly and determinately the land lay awaiting its fate—the charger's trampling hooves, the blazing roof-tree, the falling rafter, the half-company with its muskets all pointed at the heart of one honest man (whose only fault was that he thought differently about religion from King Louis and his mistress), the orphan's cry of affright, the widow's inappeasable weeping.

Cavalier had seen truly. His eyes were opened, indeed, and at one glance he spied out the nakedness, not only of himself, but of the land.

Even on his sick-bed, and in spite of all the care of

Catinat, Cavalier received tokens that there were in the camp of the Camisards others who had been impressed with the truth of his words—who, spite of the power of numbers and the strength of prejudices, thought as he thought. Notes fluttered in at the opened window as soon as he was able to sit up for an hour, and Catinat was safely upon his rounds. Initials denoted names. Numbers were used for secrecy's sake. Young men clambered to the edge of the balcony at dead of night to signify their adhesion to the chief who had, in their idea, sacrificed his life in order to speak the truth in the ears of an unwilling people.

All were not true Camisards of the Forlorn Hope even in La Cavalerie.

* * * * * *

Beneath, in the valley of the Tarn, Marshal the Marquis de Montrevel had an anxious time. Swift and secret messengers brought him news of the fate which had befallen Jean Cavalier. A fanatic Camisard, had smitten him—that is what they said—knowing better than to reveal the name of the assassin—one driven mad by the thought of surrendering to the King. Well, that is bad enough, thought the Marshal. But there have been fanatics before, and the world has gone forward in spite of fanatics and fanaticism.

Perhaps the network of wrinkles about his eyes would have grown a little plainer, the furrow dinted between his brows become somewhat deeper cleft, if he had known that the man who had gone out with the dagger red from the ancient hall of the Templerie was Martin Foy, his own father-in-law.

But it was his doom that he should not know. And without such ignorances as these even Fate herself —to say nothing of the historian—could not do her perfect work.

There were, moreover, other things on the old soldier's mind. His wife and her friend, Flower-o'-the-Corn, with the various adjuncts and dependencies of the latter, furnished him with enough and to spare of anxiety for any one man.

The half-nervous crisis which had shaken Yvette passed in time, under the influence of the Marshal's protestations and exculpations, perfectly legitimate and unimpeachable as these were. But, nevertheless, something was left behind, a pregnant residuum of doubt and suspicion. Flower-o'-the-Corn, the innocent cause of all, was conscious of it when her hostess came into her room in the morning and when she went out of it at night. The Marshal, walking softly all his days, avoiding delicately every possible cause of offence, was conscious of it as he left his military subordinates and entered his own house. The prisoners, Maurice and Patrick Wellwood, separated by bolts and bars and all the formalities of opening and shutting great doors that creaked, with mighty keys which clanked and jangled, were made conscious of the change by the lack of many a little office of kindness and attention which in time past they had received as the *protégés*, in some wise, of Madame la Maréchale.

But, in spite of all, Flower-o'-the-Corn kept her place in the house of the Marquis de Montrevel. She had had many battles with herself before she resolved upon this course. But Frances Wellwood was no spoilt child. She had seen many lands, and, with a heart that remained virgin, many men as well. She had her father to think about—nay (of new), her lover also. She could serve these two but ill if she shared their prison-cell, and any consideration which they received on account of her would at once pass, if it were openly

made manifest that she had wholly lost the favour of the Marshal and his wife.

But there was another black rider who sat not less persistently, though, on the whole, less heavily behind the doughty veteran. From his friends in Paris and at Versailles he heard that the days of his commandership in the Cevennes were numbered, and that even the name of his successor was canvassed and approved.

Verily, the days were not gay at Millau upon the Tarn, and especially so to Yvette, who in time past had eaten of the fruit forbidden, and in whose mouth the after-taste was bitter.

Now nothing is so trying to the temper of even a good woman as to know herself in the wrong, and to be unable to confess it. But that which chiefly hurt the pride of Yvette was that she had reigned as Vashti in the palace of Ahasuerus. And lo! now at her gate she saw one Esther—sweeter, fairer, with the flower of her youth and innocency yet upon her. And not at her gate alone, but in her very house, in the daily sight of Ahasuerus her king, a man who had seen much, and who (she knew) scrupled not to take the thing his heart desired.

There is, indeed, no saying to what the bitter dark of Yvette's mind might have conducted her, but for an incident which befel one grey and chillish afternoon in late March, as she walked solitary by the towers of the ancient military prison.

Upon a broad terrace, which gave a view of the still blue breadths of the Tarn, and of the pleasure boats which (it was Sunday afternoon) punted out in a casual manner upon the bosom of the water, or deposited too early picnics on the sward of one of its many islands, Madame la Maréchale was walking alone.

From beneath there came the murmur of voices. She had accompanied Frances Wellwood, who had come

to visit her father. Now she awaited with a curious kind of impatience her exit. Yvette hated every moment she spent with Flower-o'-the-Corn, yet for all that she was loath to let the girl out of her sight. It was a supremely discomfortable position for all concerned—though, perhaps, of those interested it is the Marquis who deserves the first place in our commiseration, and that because he had perforce to take his wife's temper and her tongue to bed with him.

But as of old time there came a voice out of the bush to one Esdras, priest and reader of the law, so now to the wife of the Marshal de Montrevel there came one which called her by the name that had once been hers.

"*Yvette Foy! Yvette Foy!*"

It was a strange voice, thick and with a foreign timbre, but there was no mistake. Very clearly some one called her name. And Yvette, shrugging her pretty shoulder pettishly, turned to look.

But only the grey walls of the prison stretched away, rood after solid rood of masonry. The embrasures from which the defenders had once poured the molten lead on the helmets of the assailants, and which now more peacefully disposed of the surplus rainfall, grinned vacantly down upon her from high overhead.

There was no one there. Perhaps there was the gleam of a pike as a sentry, having stooped to take a humanizing look at the pretty young wife of the General, resumed his perpendicular strut upon the ramparts, but this alone gave movement to the middle distance.

"*Yvette Foy! Yvette Foy!*"

It was a muffled voice, but quite unmistakeable. The girl hurried to the verge of the terrace walk, and looked over. An ox-waggon crawled laboriously by, the animals looking little larger than flies on the mistral-parched whiteness of the roadway.

"*Yvette Foy! Yvette Foy!*"

This time, of a surety, the voice was plainly behind her. She turned quickly, and out of one of the arrow-slits of the fortress, at about the height of her head, appeared an old rag of a red colour, vehemently agitated.

She went towards it, with surprise and some anger that a prisoner should dare to call her name aloud.

"Who are you?" she answered, putting the question imperiously.

"Be you Mistress Yvette Foy?" said a voice within, still in the same strangely thickened foreign accent.

"I am the wife of the Marshal de Montrevel," the girl said. "My name was once Yvette Foy!"

"And not so long ago, I am thinking!" came the answer, "and it will be that you will have forgotten Bet, the gipsy's wife, who came with the young English Captain to La Cavalerie?"

"I have not forgotten," said Yvette, who, to do her justice, was never too proud to learn, and never turned her back on a friend without due cause.

"Then here is Bet, and also Billy her man, that would provoke the living God Himself with his crying about Keltonhill Fair," the voice went on. "I have a message for you, pretty mistress, could I but see you for a moment!"

"Speak," said Yvette, looking round her quickly, "there is no one without!"

"No, but there are plenty within here," answered the voice; "the garbage of the heavens above and of the earth beneath—one might also say the waters under the earth, save that most of these heathens have not looked upon honest water for a life-time."

"Haste you," said Yvette, "I must go. What is it that you want with me?"

"To speak with you, fair lady!"

"Speak, then," said the girl, angrily; "I have no secrets with a gipsy wife!"

"So?" said the voice, with an interrogative inflexion; "not as to the nature and uses of a certain plant—thick with hairy leaves and carrying a purple flower? Not such as concern——"

"Hush," said Yvette, "what do you want with me *now?*"

"To speak to you in private, lady," said the voice. "I see you walk alone—unhappy. There is sand in the axle where there should be grease. The gipsy wife knows; will you speak with her? She counselled ye well before in the matter of——"

"I will come! Be content!" said Yvette, walking towards the main entrance.

* * * * *

In ten minutes the gipsy wife, Bet, and the wife of M. le Maréchal de Montrevel were speaking face to face. All women are at heart one in trouble. Prejudice or dislike may prevent them from putting themselves in another's place, but the power is there.

A baby to hold, a crying child, a prodigal erring son, that sharp causeless weeping which they alone know, yonder silence of a broken heart, these greying hairs that thicken about the temples when a heart is being broken—these constitute the true freemasonry of women. They need no clubs after a baby is born to them. All the world is their club, and to more than half the human race the sight of a child smiling from a go-cart, or weeping over a broken toy, is more moving than the wrack of empires and all the sad tales ever told of the deaths of kings.

Only the sexless or the childless of them, or those very few who have known no pleasure either in sex

or child, yearn for the privileges of mankind. The world is, for the most part of women, one vast privilege. For their very pains are privileges, bringing forth that Divine sympathy which covers a multitude of sins.

So this dainty Yvette, with her hands delicate-fingered, her skin satin-soft, her hair tight-ringleted like a boy's, and eyes dark with slumberous fires, found herself at one step very near to Bet Marshall, of the grim gipsy race of the Faas, in whose veins ran the blackest blood of Egypt, and perhaps of those yet ancienter kings whom the Pharaohs supplanted.

Bet Marshall, with her head of badger-grey, bristled upper lip, that keen look of cunning which a thousand perils meanly surmounted never fail to give, sat and talked apart with Madame la Maréchale in her mantle of furs.

And their topic was the unending one of women—the love of men, how to win and how to keep. Nor spite of stray dissent, will this ever greatly vary. All the rest is mere rogue-elephant roaring in the wilderness—the complaint of the filching crow outcast from her own particular rookery.

The gipsy wife sat looking at Yvette a long time without speaking. Then in her curious gutteral French, like a frog croaking in the marshes, she asked a question.

"*Who is she?*"

It is to be noted that this woman had been in prison, that she knew nothing of the circumstances of Yvette's life, save what she had seen from the stable-floor of the Bon Chrétien at La Cavalerie, and learned since from the gossip of the prison floor.

Yet looking in the eyes of the other woman, her equal, she said only, "Who is she?"

"The Englishwoman!" answered Yvette.

But Marshall took the information calmly. It was as she had expected, and her plan of campaign was ready.

She saw Keltonhill Fair at the end of all, and her husband parading the long wattled street from end to end, cudgel in hand, seeking new worlds to conquer.

Incidentally, however, she was not unwilling to assist a few other persons to their several "Keltonhills." She asked certain questions, to be sure of her ground.

"She is in your house?"

"You wish her out of it, but no further ill?"

To these queries Yvette answered only by a nod of the head. Then there came another, more intimate.

"And your husband?"

"I love him!

"And he?'

Yvette flushed redly, then slowly grew pale again.

"I think—I believe—he loves me," she said, "but I have known men—many men. He is a man, and therefore I am afraid!"

The gipsy nodded. These things had not been hid from the blood of Egypt during their thousand generations.

"We," she said, softly—"we have a remedy——"

"I know," said Yvette, quickly, "I have thought of that. But that would not give me back the love of my husband!"

The gipsy wife pondered, smoothing one of Yvette's empty gloves between her fingers. "There is another way," she said. "I have tried it.

The girl looked up expectant. The gipsy moved a little nearer.

"See," she went on, "once it so happened to me—or almost. There was one Lilias, of the Baillie folk—

a good name, but hard to deal with, men and women of them. She was younger than I—perhaps—the other also. My man looked on her as on all women, with observance, yet as strong men look at that which in nowise concerns them, being content.

"Nevertheless she, this Lilias, waited for him, with downcast eyes and a heavy burden, which he would snatch up and help her to carry to her tan, as (God be just to him!) he would have done for the oldest granddam in the camp. There was no harm in him, no—nor thought of harm.

"Nor perhaps in her either! But — he was a man and it behoved me to guard mine own."

Yvette looked up sharply, with a glance of keenest interest. She had begun by listening carelessly, with a kind of wearied resignation.

"So I went to a young lad of spirit—one I knew who had noted Lilias—and I told him to be at a well in a certain wood at a time fixed. I bade him not to come alone. So with a nod and a wink he understood and was there in hiding with all his friends about him. Then I bade the lass venture forth with me to bring in the water for the night, and, well—the young man carried off the maid on horseback, as is the custom of us gipsies, while his friends restrained me so that I could not scream too soon. Thus in a good hour Lilias gat a man of her own, and I, Bet Marshall, dwelt at peace in my tent!"

She stopped, and Yvette sat taking in the moral of the tale.

"I see not how," she said, after a while.

The old gipsy wife bent and whispered in her ear.

"There is a maid—let us say Lilias, one too many in the house that is yours by right. Without there is a youth who sighs amain, and listens for her step.

With him is a minister, having power to marry. I give not much for your ingenuity if you cannot compass a horse or two for them to escape upon, me and my man accompanying them."

Yvette nodded.

"Yes," she said, "that would indeed ease me in one direction. It is well thought on; but will the girl be willing to marry the man?"

"That I leave you to find out, lady," said Bet. "Many things have happened since last I looked in her eyes. She was willing enough then, I know!"

The gipsy was conducted back to the open hall in which the common prisoners were herded together like sheep in a fold.

Yvette stood some time in deep thought after Bet Marshall had left the room.

"'Tis a thought over-simple," she murmured with a smile. "Yvette Foy as fairy godmother with a bag of sugar-plums and a 'Bless you, my children!' The world has not seen the like."

Suddenly she laughed archly and wickedly. She struck her hands together with mischievous glee. "That is it, that is it," she cried. "I *will* play fairy godmother—with variations!"

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Vice Providence Superseded.

From that hour the Marshal de Montrevel found his house suddenly changed to him. He was circled with an atmosphere of contentment. His gracious speeches to Flower-o'-the-Corn were no longer watched with jealous suspicion, no longer interrupted by a tall Nemesis with dark tempestuous brows and flashing eyes.

And the veteran was devoutly grateful. For it chanced that the despatches he was daily receiving from his monarch were by no means calculated to soothe a troubled soul.

It was obvious that his enemies were at work, and though, in order to obtain some respite, he had partially revealed his plan for the pacification of the Cevennes without further appeal to arms, rebuff followed reproof, and it was obvious that recall would march not far behind.

Specially was his action with regard to the British spy, declaring himself to be an officer of the army and staff of the Duke of Marlborough, most severely blamed. He was required to place the young man upon his trial immediately, and—this touched the honest Marquis no little—so to constitute the court that a verdict satisfactory to his Majesty the King might be returned, and a warning given which would prevent repetitions of such attempts to stir up the peoples of France

against their legitimate sovereign. To this it was added, that the King had reason to believe that the young man could produce no authorisation of his action from his superiors, and that, indeed, he was wholly disavowed by his own commander-in-chief. In which case there would, of course, be no difficulty.

The Marquis de Montrevel, who had been expecting his own dismissal or supercession, sat bewildered with the letter of the royal secretary in his hand. He would rather a thousand times it had been his recall. Stout Nicholas de Baume could have taken his pleasure bravely at his country seat for the remainder of his life in the society of the woman he had chosen. But to hold this young man's death-warrant in his hand, and be forced to carry it out with all the form and colour of justice, sickened him.

"A thousand curses on the King's Majesty!" he growled—first of all, somewhat undutifully, crumpling up the royal letter in his hand. Then he smoothed it out again to see if he could make a better of it. But the design was too clear.

"How did they learn all this?" he muttered, stamping his foot angrily; "there is a traitor somewhere—surely not among my officers? They are all devoted to me. De Banville? Well, that might be; but I cannot imagine how he got his information."

At this moment his wife came in, to find him moving restlessly hither and thither, picking up one object and then another about his chamber, and pulling distractedly at his long grey military moustachios—with de Montrevel a sure sign of mental trouble.

Yvette went up to him, and linking her arm in his, besought him to tell her his unrest. No one could be more delicately or more fitly tender than Yvette when the mood was upon her.

"Have they sent you back to the country?" she murmured, caressingly; "well, what matter! Anything will be better than this out-at-elbows Millau, where the only recreation is for the women to wash the clothes, and for the men to spit into the river from the coping of the bridge."

At her first entrance she had seen the royal letter lying crumpled on the floor, but she made no allusion to it, knowing that if he were seriously troubled it would not be long before her husband would take her into his councils.

"There," he said, laconically, indicating the document with his foot, "There is a good fellow's death-warrant—and all that woman's doing!"

Yvette's face changed ever so slightly.

"What woman?" she said, hastily, adding in a curious voice, "Is it Jean Cavalier?"

"No, the young Englishman—the officer. I thought to hold him safe till this matter had been arranged, and then have him set over the frontier. But there has been a spy amongst us. The King has been told, or what is the same thing—Scarron's widow!"

"But, after all, was the man not a spy?" asked Yvette, innocently, lifting the paper from the floor; "is this his death-warrant?"

"It is worse, a thousand times," said the Marshal, kicking at the woodwork of the window-sill with his toes; "it puts the weight of condemnation on me. I am to bear the disgrace of his death if he is executed, or be loaded by the King with the blame of mismanaging the affair if he escapes!"

Yvette smiled, with a sudden flash of pretty teeth, behind the Marshal's back, as she swiftly perused the royal letter.

"Eugenie hath done her work quickly," she thought;

" it was most fortunate that she chanced to be in waiting this month upon the Duchess."

Then she sat down by the table and knitted her brows over the manuscript with the prettiest affectation of perturbation, so that the Marquis unbent and said, as to a child, " Run away, beloved. It is not worth while troubling your head about. Luckily, it did not touch your friend or her father, and, at the worst, I daresay there is a way out. At least I can put off the court-martial as long as may be ! "

But Yvette did not run away. She sat and mused, looking at her husband the while. Presently, as with a quick impulse, she caught the gold-braided edge of his uniform, and drew him towards her. He stood looking fondly down upon her. With her other hand she reached up and caressed the rough grizzle behind his ear.

" Of course, I cannot help you, can I ? " she said ; " they say two heads are better than one, but mine is such a poor affair ! "

"You would not have this young man die ? " De Montrevel asked.

Yvette gave vent to a little pouting shudder, infinitely expressive. It disclaimed any personal interest in Maurice Raith. It expressed a general dislike to the death penalty when carried out in too close proximity to the dwelling of a Marshal's wife, and in addition, it declared a conviction that if the matter were only committed to her, she, Yvette de Baume, *née* Foy, Maréchale de Montrevel, would at once please the King, satisfy her husband's honour, and, incidentally, save the young man's life.

Now Yvette Foy could do nothing simply. In the most ordinary actions of life her motives were complex. Even in marrying her husband, and taking her position

as Madame la Maréchale, the arrangement was redeemed from the charge of being simply mercenary by Yvette's sudden discovery that she loved her husband.

Nevertheless, there was a twist in the girl's nature which made her instinctively resent the happiness of another, especially of one who had made her, for ever so short a time, feel the prick of jealousy.

Moreover, had not Maurice Raith been in her toils? She had ear-marked him. So, indeed, had she done with Cavalier, but that was different. Jean Cavalier loved her still. Maurice Raith had had the audacity to love another. Still worse, to tell her of it.

No, Maurice Raith should not be shot for a spy, if she could help it. That was not a pretty ending to any love-tale, however transient. But neither should he marry Flower-o'-the-Corn. What was there in the girl, at any rate ? Pretty—yes, perhaps—in an insipid fashion. Men raved about her. Yes, again—boys who had last kissed their mothers. Frances Wellwood should go back to Scotland and marry a parson—a pastor like her father. That was what she was fit for.

And Maurice Raith—well, she would see. At all events, he must not be thrown away upon the milk-and-water girl. So much had been arranged for him in the books of Fate, edited and arranged by Yvette Foy, Maréchale de Montrevel—*vice* Providence, superseded.

So it came to pass that Yvette Foy had, what she loved most on earth (next to the more refined forms of sin), a difficult problem to solve. She had that sort of brain which works best when surrounded by difficulties, when one problem after another is presented for solution, and of which the net result must be translated into terms of instant, vigorous, and delicate action.

Through an intermediary in Millau, Yvette kept up

a constant correspondence with certain friends in the Camisard villages, and it was, indeed, by her means that the Marshal knew everything which went on there. He was, for instance, aware of the fact that Jean Cavalier was still being nursed by Catinat, and that, though publicly deposed from authority, there was a numerous party among the younger men favourable to his plan of making a submission to the King, and of sending Cevenol regiments to the northern battlefields to fight against the King's enemies.

It only remained, therefore, for Yvette to close her combinations and bring Cavalier and those who adhered to him to the camp of the Marshal in the valley of Millau.

Now it hardly needs to be said that Yvette was the complete *aventurière* born and bred, which is something essentially different from our English "adventuress." She had attained all that an adventuress could hope for—a husband whom she loved, a high position, the sort of society in which she was best suited to shine—she who had been but the innkeeper's daughter of La Cavalerie. But Yvette was the true *aventurière pur sang*—she loved adventure for itself alone, not for what it would bring her.

Daily she declared her willingness to retire with her husband to his woods and country houses, his tree-planting and hedge-pruning. Yet she would have wearied of them in a fortnight and have begun to sigh for the space and movement of the camp, the gaily-dressed officers, the change, movement, uncertainty, the admiring eyes which followed her, the return glances keen as rapiers, soft as honey in the comb; above all, for the knowledge that she was appreciated—in short, the things which made life worth living. She had these. Nevertheless, adventure drove her with whips.

It was not intrigue so much that she cared for. Rather the love of change, of power, the need of action stimulated a nature changeful and brilliant as the neck of a pheasant or the heart of an opal.

So it need not surprise any who have followed the career of Yvette Foy thus far, to know that on the third night after her husband had shown her the King's letter she was to be found (had there been any to find her), wrapped in a hooded cloak, and in a peasant woman's dress, making her way in the direction of La Cavalerie by the steep path up which she had passed and repassed so many times.

Yvette had waited only till her husband was safe in the great tent with his officers, engaged in those interminable military discussions concerning sieges and counter-marches of which the land service never seems to weary. She herself had told de Montrevel that she was tired and would go to her own room early. In which case she knew that he would sit up half the night with his colonels and staff, and that she would not be disturbed till the next morning. Though the spring was coming, the nights were yet long, and Yvette had good reason to hope that she might be able to make the double journey in time to be back for the Marshal's breakfast hour. In any case, she had told her maid not to call her before eleven.

Only to Flower-o'-the-Corn did she reveal her intention of visiting La Cavalerie. She told her that the fact that she had received no news from her father recently filled her with the deepest anxiety. She could bear it no longer. She must go and find out, but if she had not returned by eleven the next morning, Frances was to go in person to the Marquis and reveal the cause of his wife's absence to him.

So it was with a feeling akin to elation that Yvette

found herself away from the camp and out upon the naked bareness of the limestone. The lights of the great military tent twinkled immediately beneath her. Further off she could see a faint single illumination, which she knew to be the window-light of Flower-o'-the-Corn.

"She will be saying her prayers," she said, with a brief bitter smile, almost a grimace; in which, however, was neither hatred nor envy, but rather the involuntary homage which a godless woman pays to one who believes as a woman should. There was a kind of sadness in the exclamation, too—for presently she sighed a little and said, "Once I could have said my prayers with the best of them—ah, once. Am I any worse now than then?—I wonder."

Then, as she turned her face towards the great mass of the Larzac above her, all blanched in the bleaching moonlight, placid, still, windless, the long shadows of its boulder-splinters projected across the wind-dried crumble of the soil, something took hold on her with a vivid sense of pleasure. She drew a long breath.

"After all, what matter?" she said. "Things happen to me; or, if of themselves they do not happen, I will make them happen. I had rather be a gipsy wife and trudge it along the highway with Bet Marshall, than like Eugenie, live as bond-slave and maid-of-honour to Madame Scarron, Mother Superior of the Royal nunnery."

"Still," she continued, as she made her way upward, "I own that I would like to walk once in the Œil de Bœuf—just once, with M. le Duc d'Orleans, and—my husband—looking on."

It was the fullest full of the moon and a glorious night. The turn of the year had, as usual, brought vast crenellated clouds into the sky, the bastions and

towers of some Titanic architecture. These alternately revealed and concealed the moon, as they drifted slow as galleons of Spain upon a sea of glass, from one side of the black hemisphere of night to the other.

The surface of the Causse, once Yvette had attained to the higher levels, spread out before her, plain as the palm of a hand, save for those curiously characteristic rocks, which, apparently without connection with the underlying limestone, stand up like icebergs out of the sea, irregular, pinnacled, the *débris* of temples destroyed or ever foot of man fell there—spires, gargoyles, hideous monsters, all dejected in some unutterable catastrophe and become more horrible in the moonlight, or on the other hand modified to the divine calm of the Buddha himself, by some passing effect of illumination or trick of cloud umbration.

And across this, without pause, quick-footed, self-reliant, well-armed, Yvette took her way. Her heart beat faster, indeed, but it was with an excitement wholly pleasurable. She feared the lurking shapes of these primæval monsters no more than the casual sheep which, having escaped from their flocks, had hidden away in order to crop the grasses of the coming spring-time in the sheltered valleys, or where a few patches of melting snow, with snowdrop and tufts of the small cruciform gentian, blue as turquoise, formed an irresistible temptation.

A wonderful land, this of the Causses, where the rain never comes to stay. Indeed, it might as well rain on a vast dry sponge thirty miles across and four or five thousand feet in height. The sheep up there never drink. They only eat the sparse tender grass when the dew is upon it. Yet from their milk the curious cheese called Roquefort is made, which, being kept long in cool lime-stone cellars—the cellules of

the stony sponge—puts on something of the flavour of the rock plants, thyme, juniper, dwarf birch, honey-sweet heath, from which it was distilled.

But of all this, and concerning all the lives, true and loyal, that had been passed there—Huguenot and Catholic, Camisard and Cadet of the Cross, this little Yvette did not trouble her head. All was the same to her. The world, as it seemed to the active brain which lay behind the white brow with its fringe of dark locks, was a spider's world, made up of excellent good webs, laid for the cunningest purposes, or sometimes of a summer morning sent wavering gossamer-fine through space for the mere joy of production. Often, indeed, they came to nothing—the fly escaped, the net was broken. The spider had come in contact with the Superior Power—a man, a horse, anything—which are as mysterious to Spiderdom as God and Providence seem to us, tearing rudely away that which has cost so much of thought and effort to produce.

Yvette, the beautiful spider, could not help her nature. She was at it again, laying her webs in the moonlight as she took her way to La Cavalerie. Jean Cavalier was the name of the fly this time—a good fly enough, an active fly. Once he had been in the toils before. In a sense he was so still. But—with a sudden sense of disappointment the thought came to her—he showed symptoms of escaping, or perhaps, more exactly, of becoming her husband's fly, not hers. Yvette took no interest in her husband's flies.

But though her eyes were acute, her senses vivid, yet there was that abroad upon the face of the waste whose faculties were infinitely keener, more alert than hers. Back there behind the ledge was a shape which, had Yvette only stopped quickly enough, she might

have seen stand still, instantly turned to stone, between two blocks as bizarre in appearance as itself, or, turning, she might have caught a shadow flitting towards her silent-footed as a cloud-patch across the waste. From boulder to boulder the Thing glided, always following closely, always upon her track, yet never approaching too near nor yet permitting the girl to get so far away that one swift rush would not bring pursuer and pursued face to face

How many turn their heads, journeying across the wilderness, when there is no pursuer! On the other hand, how many also are tracked, step by step, from refuge to covert, by a Fate whose footfall is never heard, whose presence never noted.

The Thing that followed Yvette was of human form and ran swiftly, but even had she turned and seen, it would instantly have stood so still upon the plain, which was strewn with a myriad of rocks of all shapes, that she might easily have taken it for one of those strange and weird boulder shapes which cumber the vast table-land of the Larzac.

Yvette, however, her mind full of her mission, went on her way, following the track mechanically, where, across the waste, great wooden posts are set up, gaunt and grey, to mark the highway through the long cumbering snows of winter.

At length the walls of the little Templar town, the entrenched citadel of the Camisard rebels, could be discerned upon the highest roof of the Larzac. The first low outposts could hardly be seen. They were sunk behind the dykes and hedges with which Cavalier had cut up the ground to afford shelter to his troops.

It was interesting to note the method of Yvette Foy's homecoming. Nothing of uncertainty—nothing of fear marked her approach to her ancient dwelling-

place. On the contrary, her foot took on a more certain spring, her limbs a new swiftness of motion as she came close to the walls of La Cavalerie.

Among the many and grave faults of Mistress Yvette that of miserliness had no place. The lively lady was no niggard. Therefore she was well served as to her intelligence department.

At the advance post she had the pass-word ready, sign and countersign, just as Catinat had arranged them. She went straight to the gatehouse, still tenanted by old Elise, who had remained in the dirt of her unused apartments, like an ancient brood hen "clutched" in the summer dust under a bank, ever since the departure of Flower-o'-the-Corn.

At the outer lines the flitting phantom which had accompanied Yvette across the waste of grey stones stopped suddenly—not, as it appeared, because the trenches and sentinels presented any particular difficulty, but solely because, having convoyed the girl so far, its mission was ended.

Yvette tapped lightly on a window that still remained lit on the first storey, with one of the long dried reeds of which the rude garden fence was constructed. All was done easily and naturally, as if it had been an action of long custom.

But there was that within the house of old Elise which had some need of secrecy. All indeed was dark and grim and desolate to the outside view.

But when once the door had been opened in response to the word which Yvette spoke in a low tone, the girl found herself in a swarming nest of young male humanity.

"Is Jean Cavalier here?" she said, softly, as she entered.

"Not yet," said the frowy hag, whose fondness for

strong liquors perfumed the whole house and even sent strays of floating *eau-de-vie* out athwart the path of the passing traveller. Cavalier was late that night, she grumbled. It was not his custom, but, as Catinat still kept an eye upon him, he had to be careful. Soon, however, when her good lads got to work, there would be no more Catinats, haling poor honest women before the justicers and elders of the village—elders, indeed, some of them no better than they should be, for all their gravity! Ah, the tales she could tell—"an she would—aye, an she would!"

Whereupon Madame Elise sat down and wept with feeble copiousness, because she was a forlorn old woman who had no friends and had drunk rather more *eau-de-vie* than was good for her.

Yvette turned up her pretty nose at this, but did not answer, nor, indeed, take very much notice of the woman's words. She talked apart with this one and that of the young men, to whom she assumed the mode of speech of a Camisard who had faced things, and knew (what she was anxious that they also should acknowledge) that there was no hope for them or their country save in submitting to the King.

At last there was a general stir. The door opened, and a young man of a pale countenance came in leaning heavily upon a staff.

"It is he!" The whisper went round, and all men's faces grew brighter, their manner more assured.

Yvette stood up to greet the leader, throwing back her hooded cloak suddenly. The lamplight shone upwards on her clear-lined dark face, flushed with the long exercise in the chill air. Her lips were scarlet and her hair mere filmy wisps of darkness.

The young man's staff fell clattering to the floor.

"Yvette!" he cried, with a gasp of surprise, clutching with his hands at the empty air.

And he would have fallen had not the girl held out her arms.

* * * * *

As she laid him gently back on a wooden settle over which a coverlet had hastily been flung, she smiled to herself.

"Good," she said, "this will make it easier. He loves me still! Me, and none other!"

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

The Easy Descent of Avernus.

It was true. It did make it easier—for Yvette. As to Cavalier, there is an old proverb of every-day application which concerns the making of beds and the lying upon them, which as a matter of course puts him outside the reach of pity.

All the same, there are sins more deeply dyed in crimson and scarlet which have more of the world's tolerance than those of poor Jean Cavalier.

"I am here," said Yvette, as soon as Cavalier had come to himself, "to take you to the King. The interview is all arranged. You have, I see, your men about you. Any that are wanting I can help you to recruit from the sturdy fellows who are every day flocking in to the standard of the Maréchal de Montrevel. They will be delighted to serve under so famous a leader as Colonel Cavalier. So doubt not that all will happen according to our desire."

Cavalier carried his hand uncertainly to his brow, with the dazed look of one who has fallen from a great height, or has been stricken treacherously from behind.

"*I hold him!*" she murmured, in her own quick expressive French, in which the phrase means more than the translation of the words into English can convey.

Yes, he was her own, haltered and handcuffed, to do

with as she would. And her purposes with her prisoner were very definite indeed.

First of all she must get him down to the camp of Millau, and to that she was now directing her energies. Two methods commended themselves to her thought. Cavalier's men might straggle away secretly, uniting at the camp below, or they might march out of La Cavalerie, pretending a raid on some neighbouring Catholic village.

On the whole, Yvette preferred the latter, both because they could then enter the camp at Millau with more *eclat*, and because they would be enabled to protect Jean Cavalier on his way down.

As for Yvette the *aventurière*, that little woman never for a moment doubted her power to protect herself.

Jean Cavalier sat near her in the upper chamber of the Gate Tower, to which still clung a certain odour of cloves and *eau-de-vie*, the special bouquet of Elise the Aged. The young man did not seem able to remove his eyes from her face. He had thought that the spell was broken, but he was now fatally to discover his mistake. As in a dream he listened to Yvette giving her commands to the men who had cast in their lot with his, and declared their willingness to follow him alone over the world.

"And do you," she spoke to two lads who stood shyly together in a corner, "go and find a couple of horses for us to ride upon. It is necessary that I should be back before the day. I do not choose to return with you, and, owing to his wound, Cavalier here cannot, as you men can, find his way to Millau at a wolf's trot! Haste you, then. Bring the horses!"

"Madame," said one of the young men, the son of Castanet, a noted leader of the Camisards of the elder

and more sober faction, "it is not so easy to find two horses in La Cavalerie at such short notice, and specially difficult to get them beyond the barriers without any questions being asked."

"No matter," she answered, imperiously, "you must do it. I say so!"

And though formerly she had been to them but Yvette Foy, the daughter of the innkeeper of La Cavalerie, yet such a vivid charm of natural command, perhaps also such a fascination of beauty and the pride of life, disengaged themselves from this girl, that the two young men saluted without a single other word spoken, and went out on their quest.

With a long sigh she laid her hand, palm downwards, on that of Jean Cavalier. "We will wait a little till they have had time to obey me!"

Now it seemed even to Cavalier that something had indeed departed from him. The word was no longer with him. The power to speak and to be obeyed had fled. True, some few of the men whom he had commanded in war, ten against a thousand, who had seen him in the van of a forlorn hope, or cheering them on with words of hope on his lips as they dashed at their enemy in the grey breaking dawn, still blindly clave to him.

They did not know, what Cavalier himself knew, that the man they worshipped was dead. A woman had taken the life out of him, and only the poor outer shell remained of all that had been Jean Cavalier—the man who, like Enoch, had walked with God, and had been to his fellow-men as a god.

* * * * *

The horses went stumbling down the steep descent into the valley of the Tarn. The snow had everywhere disappeared and the whole Causse was warm and

breathing with the coming of spring. Here and there in the clefts there was a deep deposit from which the airs blew clean and cool as from an icehouse.

The moon had sunk behind great and threatening clouds, and the face of the Larzac loomed up sombre and dark. The dissident Camisards escaped with ease from the gatehouse. They were, they had given out, going to Saint Veran to bring back word from the sister village, and to see if anything had been heard there of Martin Foy, whose hostelry of the Bon Chrétien had (to the great grief of the faithful) been practically closed since the disappearance of its master.

Whether the ease with which the exodus had been effected was wholly accidental may have some light thrown upon it by a conversation which took place behind certain rocks, advantageously placed so as to command the approaches from the direction of Millau—taking in, as it were, both the "outgate" and the "ingate" of the village.

Two men stood there, one wrapped in a Caussenard cloak — the herdsman's cloak of light grey wool, which, when the man is young, is sometimes dyed of a bright blue, but was in this case of its natural colour. His companion — whose long unkempt locks fell over his eyes and streamed on his back, wore only the ordinary blouse and knitted trunks of the workman, shoeless and without headgear. His beard had worn thin and straggling. The eyes were piercing and restless almost to the point of madness.

"You are sure that you saw her, Martin?" said the herdsman, laying his hand on the man's shoulder, from which the blouse had been partially torn away.

"Shall the father forget the child, even if he have prepared death and slaughters for her—aye, and for those with whom she hath chosen to company?" cried

Martin Foy. "Of a surety it was my daughter and none other—the cockatrice whom I have hatched, the scorpion that hath nestled in my bosom!"

"And where is she now?" said Catinat, who with his shepherd's cloak over his arm, stood back in the gloom of the great boulder behind which the two had concealed themselves.

The father of Yvette Foy pointed with his hand to the gatehouse.

"There," he said, "there is she who has come amongst us to flaunt the golden taches of her gorgeous apparel. But in the revenues of the wicked lurketh trouble, sure and sudden. In one net will I take her, and him who hath caused her to be a taunt and a cursing, a byword and a reproach among the nations."

Now Catinat himself could out-Herod Herod at this sort of denunciation, but at this present he wanted information, so without scruple he cut the man short.

"And there are with her—who?"

The face of Martin Foy took on an expression so bitter and wicked that even stout Catinat was afraid.

"The man is certainly mad," he thought, "but then in the meantime he is useful!"

"The young and the foolish," Martin Foy answered, "the sons of men that are highest in place amongst us—not yours and mine, Abdias Maurel, because (praise be to the Highest) we have no sons of our flesh to be led astray by a fair woman and a pleasant flattering tongue!"

"Yonder," he pointed fiercely with his hand towards the gatehouse, "yonder in the dwelling of the old wineskin Elise, mother of harlots, are gathered all such as dance to the pipe and the psaltery, such as for the tempting of the flesh make sweet melody, all such as love beauty and favour above the word of the Lord."

He shook both hands abroad with an indescribable gesture of hopelessness.

"But what would you? Corn when it is green, green and bursting—tasteful berries that are still unripe, pulse green in the pod, berries that fill not the husk—ah!" Here he fell into a kind of chaunt, "What saith the wise man, 'Keep a sure watch over a shameless daughter, lest she make thee a laughing-stock to thine enemies, a by-word in the city. Behold not the body's beauty, nor sit in the midst of women. For out of garments cometh a moth, and from women, wickedness! Better a churlish man than a courteous woman—a courteous woman who bringeth only shame and reproach!'"

"Hush, man, hush!" said Catinat, putting his hand over the wild man's mouth. "Heed not what is said of another by another. This woman is your own daughter—all of your kin that is left to you. Shall a man destroy his own flesh—surely no, but nourish and cherish it?"

"Bah!" cried Martin Foy, tossing back his grey locks, dank with dews of night, "if indeed she be my daughter according to the flesh, what then did Jephthah? Did Lot delay to flee from destruction because of his unfaithful wife? Or did Jehu turn aside his foot from treading upon Jezebel beneath the window in Jezreel because, forsooth, she was the daughter of a king? Nay, verily, her blood spurted against the wall, and the dogs cracked her bones in the gutter until sundown. And so be it with all wicked daughters!"

At which Catinat, old veteran of the wars as he was, whose ears had heard many things beside the crash of cannon, shuddered as he listened. But he did not again try to mollify the madman's hate.

"It is well," he said, nodding, "or, at least, it is

your own affair, Martin Foy! But tell me for what cause are so many of our young men gathered together?"

"You call yourself a captain in Israel, and you know not that!" cackled the maniac; "it is only that she who was my daughter may lead them down to the King's camp in Millau, as fools are led to the correction of the stocks!"

Catinat caught him by the wrist.

"Why, then, did not you tell me so before?" he said, fiercely; "this must be stopped, and instantly. I will go and call out the guard. These treacherous persons shall see that there are still faithful men—true Brothers of the Way—in La Cavalerie!"

The madman caught him by the thick tail of his shepherd's cloak as he turned hurriedly away.

"Are *all* captains fools?" he said, fiercely, "have they no heads given to them better filled than those of cabbages? Hath God bereft them all of wits, in making of them prophets! Prophets, forsooth! Listen! How many, think you, of these young men are the sons of those whom you call 'True Brethren of the Way?' All—I tell you, all! And how many of these fathers would put the knife to the throat of the unfaithful first-born who are there assembled? I will tell you. One only! And his name? Why, Martin Foy!"

The wild man laughed, uncontrollably.

"Ah! I must watch for you, Sieur Catinat," he continued, "and the good God knows it is hard enough these bitter nights, with the white fog of the earth-frost which sets old teeth on edge and old bones on the rack. But do I complain? Have you heard a complaint from Martin Foy? But must I also think for you, Abdias Maurel, whom the folk call Catinat? No, no; let them go—down, down into the camp of

the King. I will go with them. They shall not escape from me! There is no knife in the world so sharp as that of Martin Foy? He sharpened it upon his own skin. Feel!"

He held up the sole of his foot, and to calm him the other put down his hand to touch the place.

"There," he cried, "there—what think you of that? Was there ever whetstone like to that? And the knife? It would divide an ox's neck at one blow (given slowly with a draw, as I know how), or take the dark fine hairs off the swan-bill upper lip of — of my lady daughter!"

And the maniac sent peal after peal of weird laughter across the waste, till in fear that the alarm would be given prematurely, Catinat sprang upon him, and placed his hands across his mouth.

"Hush, fool!" he hissed, "do you want to spoil all?"

The wild man of the Causses checked himself and wagged his head with solemnity.

"No, no," he said, more calmly, "I will be sage. I forgot. I am apt to forget nowadays. But the mirthfulness of it tickles a man's midriff. They are all so clever—these young men, the King's fine scarlet officer—Cavalier the Prophet, and more than all (choke me again if I laugh too loud) my dear daughter, the lady Jezebel, who hath set up her altars upon every high hill, and done her abominations beneath every green tree!"

He took his laugh out in a gurgling rapture.

* * * * * *

So it was upon the advice and observance of a certain mad fellow, named Martin Foy, some time landlord of the hostelry of the Bon Chrétien in La Cavalerie that the troop of discontented and

disaffected among the Camisards was permitted to take their way in safety down to the King's camp in Millau.

"And so," said Catinat, at the meeting in the old hall of the Templars, when he explained his action, "the Folk of the Way are purged from those that devise iniquity! Are ye content?"

And, albeit, there were many sore of heart—fathers and brethren among that assembly, they responded all with one voice. "We are with you, Abdias Maurel, with you to the death, only for certain of these things our old eyes are dim! Pardon us! The lad was young and in somewise held our hearts!"

CHAPTER XXXIX.

The Spider's Last Web.

Thus it chanced that at Millau, deep in the Tarn valley, where the Causses approach most closely together and yet leave room for gardens and woodlets and islands on the broad still stream, most of those who have played their part in this history were collected—with one exception, which in due time shall appear.

There was (to begin with) M. le Maréchal de Montrevel, looking as unlike a nobleman and the batoneer of the first military kingdom in the world as it was possible for a man to look—broad, ruddy of countenance, bluff with a sailor's bluffness, a sturdy, out-of-doors man, with little desire for money or great position, who took his pleasures much as he took the weather—as they came—yet who, like all his countrymen, looked forward to dying a good Catholic at the last, and so getting the benefit of such churchly influence which might be current coin in the realm of shades.

Next there was (and there is no need to say a word about her) Mistress Yvette. There was—there could be, but one Yvette. Her little head was still so full of schemes that she felt she would like to undertake the love affairs of the entire army of the High Cevennes, to arrange all the *rendezvous*, to solve all the difficulties, and—to write all the love letters. She was just so clever, however, as not to know that, after all, the

world is not ruled by cleverness, but that somewhere behind there waits a grand simplicity, at once child-like and inevitable, which in a moment cuts the knot of a myriad complicated diplomacies.

But Yvette had not found this out, so she laughed and chatted and went hither and thither, already a little weary of her *coup* and ready to begin another so soon as this one should be safely out of hand.

Then, still in the house of the Maréchal, there abode Flower-o'-the-Corn, daily growing more like a Lenten lily than the sunburnt cornflower of those hot days of July when most fiercely the dog-star rages.

Down in the parade-ground, assisted—in the French sense—by hundreds of interested and sarcastic on-lookers of all arms of the service, Jean Cavalier and his men exercised—the former still a little lame from his wound, but, in even the opinion of his enemies, having in him the makings of a fine, dashing, upstanding officer.

In the outer prison, with a room to himself and the comfort of books, pens, and paper, sat Patrick Wellwood. And in the inner, his feet fast in the stocks, or at least in the iron rings provided for the recalcitrant, was our poor Maurice Raith, condemned to death as a spy, deserted by those who ought to have succoured him, disowned by the men who had sent him to do their work, and with only one heart in the whole world to keep a warm spot for him.

It chanced, however, that that warm-nested heart was the only one Maurice Raith cared about. So that, in respect of affection, there were many worse off than the condemned spy and prisoner of his most Christian Majesty, the King of France.

For the heart in which his memory flourished was that of Frances Wellwood. So in the main—come

life, come death—it was well, and very well with him.

* * * * * *

"So far, good," said Yvette to herself as she warmed her toes at the not unwelcome blaze. For even in the front of spring the crackling of logs is a heartsome thing in the valley of the Tarn after nightfall. The high Causses are so near, the ice yet blue in their unsunned caves, the snow scarce cleared from behind the stone walls of their sheepfolds.

And for Yvette, so far as her own purview went, all was indeed as it should be. But she had to reckon with the devotion of a heart that for the first time had known love, which had not wasted itself on a score of objects. Yet in this very constancy was the peril of Maurice Raith, and in the virginity of the heart of Flower-o'-the-Corn lay the power of the evil woman.

The Marshal had replied out of the stoutness of his nature and the straightness of his purpose to the letter of the King. He had put off the day of Maurice's trial by court-martial till the return message from Versailles should be received. And when it came, lo! even as he had anticipated, the purport was worse than at the first.

So when Flower-o'-the-Corn came down one morning from her bedroom, pale and of eye uncheerful, having slept little, as she entered the chamber which they had chosen for a winter parlour (looking towards the south and with the sunlight ever on the windows) she came upon Yvette apparently sobbing her heart out over a great paper which lay spread on the table before her.

"It has come," she said, without looking up and continuing to sob.

"What has come?" questioned Flower-o'-the-Corn,

beginning to tremble a little and with a tight chill gripping at her heart.

"This!" was the reply of Yvette, pushing the great written sheet across to her guest.

Frances Wellwood tried to read, but the words changed partners before her eyes. Again and again she caught the name of Maurice Raith, once the words "the aforesaid spy," and towards the end, "after the customary question, the pain of death."

She let the paper fall from her hand.

"I cannot read it," she said, "tell me quickly—is it—is it—does it mention my father?"

"Not your father," said Yvette, a little scornfully, "but the young officer, the Englishman whom my husband has been trying to save——"

"Then he is condemned to die?" said Flower-o'-the-Corn. She spoke almost coldly, because of the beating of her heart.

"No," said Yvette, "not yet; but of a surety he will be. Nothing can save him—nothing. My husband even is condemned to lose his place—it may be to lose his head."

Flower-o'-the-Corn looked at Yvette. She saw the girl was watching her every movement. At such times the wits of women work quicker and surer than the slower ratiocinations of mankind. For the first time she understood. Suddenly, with an infinite illumination, as when the lightning flashes from the east to the west—*she knew!* Yvette's tears were crocodile tears. She hated Maurice. She had *not* tried to save him. She hated her, Frances Wellwood, because he loved her. She wished to punish her for that which she had not done—nor, indeed, had ever dreamed of doing. And once a woman sees, nothing can ever shut her eyes again. The rift within the lute

can never be made whole, though there are various plasters and ligatures recommended by the faculty, and even worn and certificated by some.

For a long moment the girl thought of casting herself upon the mercy of the Marshal. But the doubt whether, apart from his wife, he could do anything, or would if he could, deterred her. And, meantime, Yvette continued to watch her keenly. She had seen distrust and dislike forming themselves behind the blue eyes of Frances Wellwood.

In an instant her great black eyes began to sparkle. She drew a deep breath indicative of determination to have matters put on an intelligible footing. That was a game at which Yvette could give as good as she got, and ordinarily a great deal better. The eyes of the two women met and stayed. There was a struggle 'twixt black and blue, and for the moment the black had the better of the strife—perhaps because they had the less to lose. But Yvette was a woman who would do as much to spite a rival, or to revenge herself upon a man who had escaped from her snare, as a better woman would to save the life of a husband or a lover.

And in this lay her danger, perhaps also some part of her charm. For some there be who are fond of snakes, beautiful, with glancing scales and arching necks, with tongues that flicker and eyes like jewels. Such are wont to say to themselves—"Let us fill our cups with costly wine and crown us with rosebuds. For to-night under the full moon is the time to worship Queen Lilith, the snake-woman, whom Adam had before the coming of Eve." And there is that in the heart of every man which would almost compel him against his will to this worship. And if by good hap and the strength of That which is Higher he escape,

there remains yet within him a regret, as of one who cannot say,

I have let no flower of the Spring pass me by!

And so, looking at her enemy, recognised for the first time, and knowing her the stronger, Frances Wellwood said in a faint even tone, "What would you have me do to save him? Tell me, and I will do it!"

For with the pitiless and universal unbelief which comes to the mind of an unsuspecting woman suddenly apprised of enmity, Frances Wellwood saw naught but untruthfulness about her. To her Yvette represented all evil. She was its fount and origin.

In this, of course, like all good women, she was unjust. Yvette had not caused all the misfortunes of Maurice Raith and Flower-o'-the-Corn. She had only taken advantage of circumstances and (as it were) helped them on from behind.

Still it was scarcely the time to expect Frances Wellwood to make fine distinctions. The wind blows where it listeth, and out of the mere vague and emptiness of space there had leaped, sudden and complete, armed *cap-à-pie*, the certainty of her friend Yvette's treachery. No words can explain with what crushing instantaneousness the conviction arrived, nor yet analyse its effect upon Flower-o'-the-Corn. But since there was more than her own life at peril, she shut away everything as none but a woman can, and uttered only the words, "*What would you have me do? Tell me, and I will do it!*"

It was the first clash of rapiers and Yvette, albeit ready with her weapon, was a little surprised.

"I tell you to do what?" she said, looking up wondering. Her tears had dried themselves by magic so soon as she saw that they were of no use, as fractious children

stop crying when shut in a garret where no one can hear them. "What have *I* to do with the matter?

"Everything!" said Flower-o'-the-Corn, with more than the sternness of a man.

"You forget our positions," cried Yvette, "I am the wife of——"

"I know," said Flower-o'-the-Corn—"of an honest man!"

Yvette controlled herself. There is no room for the more dramatic forms of passion in Spider-land. Webs must be woven mathematically. When one has to spin the ropes out of one's own body and do problems with one's head involving angles, cosines, connections, and the strength of materials all at the same time, anything in the shape of a common vulgar quarrel had better be avoided.

"Tell me!" repeated Frances, with the pertinacity of the naturally unsuspicious.

"Well, then," said Yvette, "so far as I know (and my husband is with me in this), there is but one thing that can save the life of the spy, Maurice Raith, and it may be that also of your father—that you shall immediately consent to be married to Colonel Cavalier."

Flower-o'-the-Corn paled to the lips and then slowly became scarlet again, as the tides of shame flooded back to her cheek.

"And tell me why you propose this to me," she said. "I hardly know the man. And how will that save the life of Maurice Raith or that of my father, if, as you say, that be at stake?"

For the fraction of a second Yvette hesitated. It was indeed not so easy a question to answer, even though she had been preparing for it some time. A faint flush rose to her cheek, on which such signals of distress were not often hung out.

"I will tell you," she said, slowly, and her eyes brightened and became truthful as with the light of an inner conviction. (Really it was only the mental exertion necessary for the production of a more than usually finished lie.)

"The King and those who are about him require a sacrifice," she said. "The war has continued too long. My husband, your father, or another—some head must fall. Well," (speaking slowly and with determination) "whose head soever it be, it shall not be that of my husband. Madame de Maintenon is angry against the English—zealous for the Church. The English, she says, have meddled too much. But for my Lord Marlborough there would have been no war in the Low Countries or in Germany. He has blown the embers into flame, and now the English would stir up Frenchmen against Frenchmen. Therefore to please Madame de Maintenon this young man must die—one for many!"

"So much I can understand!" said Flower-o'-the-Corn, "but how am I to save his life?"

"*Thus*," said Yvette, looking at her straight in the face, "if we can persuade the King that the Camisards are divided among themselves—if we can send him three or four sturdy regiments with full ranks to fight his battles, with Colonel Jean Cavalier at the head of them—if that commander takes to Court with him a young and lovely bride—we shall be able to make the King forget his enmity to this English soldier, whom even his own people have disowned!"

"Ah!" said Frances, steadily on the defensive, "then the King will pardon Maurice Raith if I—marry—Jean Cavalier! Has his Majesty so expressed himself? Has he given the promise? I cannot be content with the chance."

It was close fighting now, closer than hand to hand, as only women can encounter. A man may love battle for its own sake and be a hero, and without being a heroine Yvette loved the stress of combat, the push of pikes, as never man did. To be in a difficulty insoluble to all others, to be shut in a seeming hopeless *cul-de-sac*—these were more to Yvette Foy than the utmost pleasures of sense. She would rather have been Satan plotting against an omnipotent, omniscent Ruler, than have companied with Michael and that Other when they marshalled the stars or ever the foundations of Paradise were laid.

For the Power that worketh in darkness has also servants who serve him for love alone. And among all his emissaries he has none so useful as these.

"His Majesty has not yet expressed himself—that is, exactly," said Yvette, meeting Flower-o'-the-Corn's look squarely, "but all the same it is so in effect. If you will marry the young chief of the Camisard regiments, it is clear that many hundreds who are now wavering will join us at once. You are the daughter of their greatest preacher, of the man who only the other day set all their hearts on fire, so that they would have followed him to the ends of the earth. Your adhesion will help us enormously. Also it will save the young man's life—it will re-establish my husband's credit, and——"

"In fact, you offer me the life of the man I love as the price of my honour!"

"It is no dishonour for any woman to marry a good man, Mistress Frances!" said Yvette, keenly.

"As you should best know!" retorted Flower-o'-the-Corn.

Yvette bent her head. There was this of good about her. She had no evil to speak concerning her husband.

"I do indeed know. A man better than Nicholas de Baume does not breathe!"

Then having as it were cleared her conscience, Yvette gave back what she got, reposting instantly with a question.

"You confess, then, that you love this spy—this young prisoner whose life would be held justly forfeit to the laws of every military establishment in the world?"

Frances nodded gravely and proudly.

"I love him!" she answered.

Yvette smiled a bitter smile, and rustled with light reflective amusement the leaves of a small red book in which were various memoranda in a delicately feminine hand.

"Some people have the art to forget," she said. "I wish it pertained to me. I find a note here under date of the twentieth of December. It concerns the salon of the Bon Chrétien at La Cavalerie, and certain things which befel there. Mademoiselle should keep a diary—as I do!"

"I have no doubt it is necessary," said Flower-o'-the-Corn, bitterly, in her turn, "there are so many certain things to be remembered. I have only to charge my mind with a few things and those easily retained!"

Yvette trilled with mocking laughter.

"You mistake," she said, sobering a little, "I am no caged turtle-dove, the whiteness of whose feathers is sullied by breathing upon them. I have lien among the pots. The little more and the little less are equal to me. I take my place in the world of men as comrade and equal. Go, little plaything! You, not I, are the feather-weight—blown by the wind, held by the gossamer, tethered by the silken thread of 'What says this one?' and 'What says that?' For me I care not what any says!"

CHAPTER XL.

A Flower of Evil.

"Then, I take it, you will marry Colonel Cavalier?"

It was Yvette who was speaking.

"That will I never! Maurice Raith would rather die twice over!"

"He is like to! But, first, you can go to him, and tell him that you—*you* alone have condemned him to death. There are those here who are willing to save him, but it is not permitted to them, because of you! Go! Shall I give you a pass to Monsieur Bechet of the Parquet?"

She pointed with her hand to the door. There were few sights finer, or more convincing, than Yvette Foy imperial in the righteousness of her indignation.

"And you say that you love him!" she added in a lower tone and with concentred irony; "why, to save the man I loved from death I would marry——"

"A marshal of France?" put in Frances, quietly.

"Well taken," cried Yvette, good humouredly; "some of them are, indeed, no handsomer than they need be, but not (as you well know) Nicholas de Baume. To save the life of the man I loved I would marry a rag-picker, a camp-follower, a scarecrow out of the vineyards with a yard of ragged shirt hanging out beneath his coat—aye! or with no coat at all."

"And what guarantee have I that his life will

be spared, if I consented to marry this man ? " said Flower-o'-the-Corn, shrewdly.

" We will send Captain Raith into Spain with Billy the gipsy, his servant," said Yvette, promptly, who had thought the matter over, " and once he is in safety, Bet will come back and tell you. You can trust her. Then, and not till then, you shall marry Jean Cavalier. Your father must remain to do his office, and to be a hostage for your complaisance ! "

" I agree," said Flower-o'-the-Corn, with promptness, " I will marry this man to save the life of Maurice Raith. But, first, I must see him and tell him why ! "

" As to that," said Yvette, with an air of reflection, " you can, of course, please yourself, but if you take my advice you will do nothing of the kind. He would not believe you ! "

" Of that I must take my chance," said Flower-o'-the-Corn, sadly ; " at least, I can tell him the truth."

" Then I shall see to it that the interview is granted you," said Yvette. "I will speak concerning the permit to my husband."

Flower-o'-the-Corn stood looking at her. A sudden thought flushed her cheek with a new hope. But in another moment she knew that it also was in vain.

" But will Jean Cavalier wish to marry me ? " she said.

Yvette took a hand-mirror of Venice glass, breathed on it, and polished it carefully with her silken sleeve. (In some things she was still the " gamine " of the streets, as in the days before her father " put on the white shirt," as giving in his adhesion to the extreme Camisard party was denominated.

" Look ! " she said ; " would any man in his right mind refuse to marry that ? "

Without thinking much of what she was doing,

Flower-o'-the-Corn looked, and the Venice hand-glass gave back a pale face of the perfectest beauty—hair in close ringlets, the colour of the inner chestnut when it is yet scarcely ripe, eyes blue as a pale blue sky over a darker sea, and lips redder than the twin petals of the geranium.

"But he does not love me," she objected; "he loves—loves——"

"He loves *me*, you mean?" interrupted Yvette, scornfully. "Well, he will not be the first man who finds it for his good to change his mind. But he will love you well enough, do not doubt it. I shall have something to say to Colonel Jean Cavalier, presently in the service of his Majesty King Louis the Fourteenth. The young man shall appreciate his blessings before I have done with him. And besides [she drew herself up primly], I am a married woman, and it is highly improper, not to say injurious, that he should have any thoughts of me. I will go and tell him so!"

At the same time Yvette, chief of web-spinners, was not so easy in her mind as she had pretended to be, as to how the matter might be taken by Jean Cavalier. But she was not a lady to rest upon her oars. If a thing had to be done, Yvette did not stand upon the order of doing. She did it.

Her husband, for his own comfort, had become (save in very exceptional instances) a man literally under authority. Like the centurion in the Scriptures, he had "under him soldiers." But in his own person he trod the straight path of domestic duty, and obeyed the word that was spoken to him as unquestioningly as if he had been one of his own corporals. If he had been a man less careful of peace, it might have been otherwise. But as it was, Nicholas de Baume loved the leafy shade and quiet side of life. He had but a

few years to live, he was wont to say, and any quarrels in which he was compelled to take part must be those of his blessed and most eminently Christian Majesty, Louis the Great. So for the sake of a quiet life, in all unessentials he was content to serve his wife, and to please her, judging it better (as he also said) to anger the distant tiger than to irritate the gad-fly which was buzzing at his ear.

So, in the disposal of her own time and of her husband's influence, Yvette had a free hand. No child of a rich old couple could have been more completely spoilt. Yet to the outward view there was nothing of the spoiled child about Yvette. She was as complaisant to the soldier on guard, or to Billy Marshall, remitted from the guard-house and set to the doing of odd jobs about the Marshal's quarters, as to dukes and counts of noblest lineage who came to offer duty and service to the King's representative in the High Cevennes.

Yvette's faults were as the stars of heaven (or in a fresher metaphor, as the sand on the sea-shore) for number, but she had, though not perhaps so obviously, her virtues also. For instance, she was good-humoured, and generous, so long as it cost her nothing beyond a smile, and a little gold out of her pocket. She was never spiteful, so long as her projects were not interfered with. She was popular, because she took pains to be so, and it was one of her mottoes that one never knows when one may need an ally. Yvette did not disdain to make friends with the Mammon of Unrighteousness. She knew the value of money, the power of every single golden shield, stamped with the lilies of Bourbon. The limits of its usefulness she also knew.

So when Madame La Maréchale put her hand upon the coat-sleeve of the commandant of the military

prison, and with sweet particularity of speech whispered her wants into his ear, that worthy officer felt his heart stirred as it had not been by all the privileges of that domesticity which he had enjoyed for years.

Or again when Madame, in dainty furs and the prettiest of boots, stood upon the verge of a flooded dyke (at least two feet wide and as several inches deep), it was that squire of dames, the gallant Bechet, sergeant major and chief of the transport, who helped her across, and neither forgot it, nor spoke of it, to his dying day—fighting, indeed, a duel to the death against a chance defamer of her good name. These, and such as these, were Yvette's friends, and in the day of need they stood close about her, a quick, willing, ready, devoted array, faithful at a time when the Mammon of Unrighteousness would have taken to itself wings and fled away to the place appointed for such dross.

So when Yvette desired to speak to Maurice, there was for her a plain road and a ready—Monsieur Bechet attending her with his keys, and waiting decorously at the end of the passage for her outgate, in order to show that he had no desire to overhear what so charming a lady might have to say to his English prisoner.

So in like manner when it was Colonel Cavalier whose presence was desired in the Maréchale's chamber—lo! his excellency her husband was ready to absent himself. His soldier servant mounted guard on the stairs to see that Madame was in no way disturbed. The very guard at the door told lies for her sake, cursing only under their breaths to think that any Protestant "pequin," "caniche," "barbet," should share the favours of so sweet a lady.

But to Jean Cavalier, marching and counter-marching hither and thither on the military exercise-ground

down by the side of the Tarn, almost within gun-shot of his own old outposts, there was something numbing and strangling in the proximity of Yvette, the wife of Nicholas de Baume, Marshal of France.

It was not that he had any hatred in his heart against the woman who had made him love her. After all, he had never asked her whether she was married or single. Only his heart had gone out to her and—God forgive him, he loved her still. Did he say "God forgive him"? What need? He never could be forgiven. He had sinned the unpardonable sin. Henceforward it only remained for him to march according to orders, to fight as a mercenary in the army of the enemies of truth, and—the sooner he could find death the better for him. Meantime, here, close to him, within the bounds of the same camp, was the woman who possessed him, body and soul. And in the cool filtered light of a moist spring afternoon her summons came to him.

He went—as he would have gone to God's judgment-seat, without either fear or hope, simply because the order had come to him. He was in the mood in which Felton stabbed Buckingham, or Charlotte Corday went straight from the Girondist circles of Caen to put her knife in Marat.

But Yvette had other and softer uses for her slave. Knowing that she did not by any means look her best in the grey semi-twilight of the Tarn valley, when the sky is overcast with the warm cloud-spume of the south, Yvette, with the instinctive offensive of creatures feminine, had taken more than ordinary pains with her toilette. A bunch of scarlet berries was in her black hair, and on her bosom another, both placed with the instinctive rightness of the artist.

Cavalier entered. The dead sombre lassitude of his

eye took on a glow momentarily brighter. This man had wandered in the gardens called of Sodom and Gomorrah, where the apples are few and very bitter. He had learned the lesson that upon earth, only the sinner can judge of sin, or know aught of its heinousness, or whether at the last it can be forgiven. Others might hope that he, Jean Cavalier, might yet escape unto Zoar (" Behold, is it not a little one ? ") even as did Lot, but he knew that he was left on the plains of fire as a memorial for ever.

For in this matter a man standeth or falleth to his own God—that is, to his own soul.

Cavalier stood facing Yvette. She advanced and held out her hand. He was growing old, though no more than two-and-twenty years of his age. His hair was already greying and the freshness of boyhood had passed from his cheek.

He took the hand of the woman he loved, but his lips did not utter a sound. Only a quiver ran through his limbs—something, as it seemed, between a sigh and a shudder. His eye became fixed and immobile. Well might this strange girl say of the Camisard chief, " I hold him ! "

" I have sent for you," she said, keeping the bright spark in either eye fixed upon him ; " I have somewhat to say to you."

Cavalier bowed without speaking.

" There is a young girl here," she went on, choosing her words ; " I wish you to marry her."

Cavalier maintained his attitude. If anything his face grew paler than before, but the difference was so slight as to be almost invisible. He waited further information—not explanations. With these Yvette did not propose to trouble him. She knew that she need not to " play fine " with a man so simple and

natural. Finesse was only thrown away. She would tell him just what she chose. It was her will. She "held him." That was enough.

"For all our sakes you must carry a good force to the King," she said; "we must not leave the Cevennes half pacified. The Pastor Wellwood is of great power among the fanatics. You are to marry his daughter. By so doing you will save my husband—more, you will save me!"

"You bid me to do this?" He said the words simply, like a schoolboy repeating his instructions to make sure of them.

"I do bid you!" she said as simply, without the least heat or emphasis. The thing was simply final for Jean Cavalier, and the woman knew it. Whence had she this power, and for what purpose was it given?

Yvette felt that any further words were unnecessary. Save for her natural compassion she might now have ordered him to the door like a servitor. But of her own free will she added somewhat by way of explanation.

"Three lives are forfeit to the King—yours as a rebel and a leader of rebels, Patrick Wellwood's as a preacher and a fanatic, and that of Maurice Raith as a spy. By marrying the girl you can save all three. The King has promised it. His word is his word."

"But I love you. It has not passed from me—that which I told you! It is my doom!" said Cavalier.

"The more reason that this marriage should take place—were it only for my sake!" interjected Yvette. "Your mere presence in the camp compromises my good name!"

"But the girl," faltered Cavalier, "she will not—that is, she may not. I have only seen her once or twice in the presence of her father. And even then it seemed to me——"

"Well, what seemed to you?" said Yvette, sharply.

"That she loved another!"

"His name?"

"The young Englishman—her countryman!"

"And did it seem to you," she added, with an involuntary sneer, "since your faculties were so observant, that her affection found a return?"

"It is difficult to say," answered the young man simply, "but such was the impression which remained with me."

"That Maurice Raith loved her?"

"Yes!"

Yvette fastened her little sharp teeth in her own lip and bit till a bead of scarlet appeared upon her chin.

"He shall marry her now, if I have to hold the knife to both their throats!" she murmured, in a fierce undertone. But aloud she said, "This will save us all—my honour, the Marshal's credit, your own influence, the lives of three at least—and besides, man, are you blind? She is beautiful! Certes, there are not many in France who have the refusal of so charming a bride!"

"For me, it is sufficient that you bid me marry her!" he said, heavily.

Then Yvette, daughter of the Old Serpent, having attained her purpose, was inclined to be gracious after her kind.

She rose and stood before him with her hand upon his arm.

"Why, then," she said, "the sooner you begin your love-making the better! There remains but short time in which to do so much."

She lifted up her face to him with an arch gleefulness, daintily mischievous.

"So, pleasant though such things can be made, I

must ask you to cut short the preliminaries. Only before you go—— ! "

She stoppedand looked down with mock modesty, tapping the parquet floor with her little foot. Cavalier did not move, steadily regarding her.

She glanced up suddenly, permitting her eyes to meet his full volley.

" Only—" she said again, and again paused, provocative, her face very close to his.

" Well, if you will not, I will," she cried, suddenly throwing her arms about his neck.

And she kissed him with laughing wilfulness.

" It is for the last time—a final reward of merit," she said, explaining the circumstance. " I do not kiss married men. And—I have my scruples even about engaged ones ! Here comes the Maréchal ! "

CHAPTER XLI.

The Princess of Butterflies.

It was a strange interview. It could not be said of Frances Wellwood and Jean Cavalier "Whom God hath joined, let no man put asunder."

Rather an impish kinswoman of the Prince of Flies (the Princess of Butterflies, she might have been named, no ways amiss) had joined them. Yet to the outer eye, to the common bruit of the camp and country it seemed a natural enough alliance, and one very likely to recommend itself alike to the Powers above and the powers upon the earth.

The late prophet and ex-leader of the fighting Camisards had been brought to better and more ordinary ways of thinking by the daughter of one of their greatest preachers—an Englishwoman truly, but no fanatic or friend of fanatics. Her father was a most learned man and of much authority among the poor ignorant folk by reason of his having come from Geneva, their head place—where their Bible (all writ in French like a common chap-book) was made by one Jean Calvin, who was a wicked monster, and, ere he went to his own place, inflicted much harm on the Pope and the true Church. They said, moreover, that the young Englishwoman had been a long time in the family of the Maréchale, and that in time she, too, would make her peace with Holy Church—even as the lady

Marquise had done, who now went regularly to Mass and to confession every Friday—also thrice a week in Lent, a very devout woman.

But when Jean Cavalier met his bride that was to be, neither of them recked of the gossip of the province or of the half-envious laughters of the camp.

"I shall have my work before me with the two of you," thought Yvette, "but it had best be got over at once."

She sighed. "I am not sure, after all, that it would not be better for me to retire to the country and grow potatoes."

She sat a long time tapping her white teeth with an ivory knitting-needle. "After all," she said, half aloud, "why should she not marry the Englishman? That is, if he likes milk-and-water."

Her brow darkened and a slow smile circled her lips, subtle and full of naughtiness. "No, my friend. Each one for herself. My husband is an old man; I am young. Who lives longest sees the most. He is a man, this Englishman, and once already has preferred good wine on the lees to pale milk-and-water. Who knows but he may again? She shall marry Cavalier. Bid him enter!"

And she sent a maid to request that Mademoiselle Frances, if she had nothing better to do, would be good enough to come down to the chamber of Madame la Maréchale.

She came, tall, pale, of a refined and *spirituelle* beauty, with eyes that seemed to look through and beyond things and to see the invisible. She had come directly from her father's cell, where she had been listening to a newly-written reply to the mistakes and mis-statements contained in Mr. Shield's "Life" of Mr. Renwick (the late Mr. James), without, however,

hearing one word of the abundant text, and yet more abundant commentary.

As the girl entered the room she found herself suddenly face to face with Jean Cavalier. At the sound of footsteps Yvette had moved a little back till she stood in the shadow of a curtain, and from thence she kept her great dark eyes fixedly upon Cavalier. At sight of Flower-o'-the-Corn the young man moved forward almost automatically, though not without a certain dignity, raised her hand to his lips and kissed it with quiet and befitting reverence.

Then he began to speak in a slow, even, slightly strained voice, not at all like his own as Flower-o'-the-Corn remembered it among the men at La Cavalerie, or even on the evenings when he used to come to the gatehouse to talk to her father, and—the detail returned to her now with a peculiar thrill—to look shyly over at herself. That was in the days before the advent of Maurice Raith, before Yvette Foy, before her world had been made, and, alas! unmade. The spider had not begun to spin in those days—or, at least, the flies were different and the webs spread in other parlours.

"I have the honour to beg that Mademoiselle will consider me as a suitor for her hand," he said. "I have the happiness to believe that my addresses are not unpleasing to mademoiselle's father, and that, in time, mademoiselle herself may come to look favourably upon them. If she will accept of me as her husband, I promise to do all that any man can to give her a happy future."

Behind the curtain Yvette smiled a wicked smile. And the interpretation thereof was, "Not thus, but quite otherwise, did he make love to me."

"But, then," she admitted, frankly smiling at the reminiscence, "perhaps I also made love to him.

And, at any rate, milk-and-water does not intoxicate a man." For there was a certain careless fairness about Yvette, though her sense of moral perspective was certainly deficient.

Yet Frances Wellwood, having no comparisons to make, and only utterly sick at heart, found the young man's words not without a certain native dignity.

"I thank you," she said, simply and sincerely, "you do me too great honour. According to the custom of your country, I shall be satisfied if you settle the details of—that which is to be—with my father."

Yvette now came forward slowly and with many meaning glances, first at one and then at the other.

"This also is according to the custom of the country—that I should be your chaperon," she said, laughing; "but, then, my dears, I am an old married woman. I promise you I will sit in the window with my back to the settle, and look out for my husband. He likes me to throw him a kiss as he comes up the gravel walk."

A domestic attention which, it is needless to relate, had the mendacious Yvette ever dreamed of carrying into practice, would have driven the worthy Marshal of France into an immediate fit of apoplexy in the midst of his staff.

* * * * * *

Jean Cavalier and Flower-o'-the-Corn did not avail themselves of the benevolent, or malevolent, offer of Madame la Maréchale. For a sense of utter heaviness and desolation weighed upon them both. The future stretched before Flower-o'-the-Corn like to the valley of the shadow of death, yet even at that moment the thought that she was saving the life of Maurice Raith brought her some little comfort.

As for Jean Cavalier, in spite of himself, he thought of Yvette's words, that she would not kiss him any

more. For the power of a woman when she is strong was upon him. And, though he was about to be married to a woman high above Yvette Foy, as the heavens are high above the earth, yet his heart went lingering and longing after her. And help himself he could not.

So they sat and were silent, each of them looking different ways, till Yvette laughed, saying, "You two will have a quiet house of it, by my faith."

At this Cavalier plucked up some heart, or perhaps the sting of Yvette's scorn pricked him. He came near and took the hand of Flower-o'-the-Corn in his. It lay there soft and moist as a white bloom brought from the rose-garden in the morning.

But, after a while, as they still sat silent, Yvette laughed again. "I see how it is," she said, "my presence irketh you. I must see to the house. There is a salad for the Marshal's supper which he will refuse if it be prepared by any hand but mine."

So saying, she made for the door, glancing mischievously over her shoulder as she went, whereupon both of the new-made lovers started up simultaneously.

"Do not go!" they said, as with one voice.

At which Yvette broke into peal after peal of laughter, laughing till the tears started from her eyes and ran down her cheeks.

"You are right," she said; "why waste time now in foolish talk and such-like, the commonplaces of sweethearting? After to-morrow you will have all the rest of your lives for it."

Then she stretched out her hand towards them with two fingers extended in a manner highly episcopal. "Bless you, my children!" she said.

CHAPTER XLII.

The Gospel of Loving.

There remained for Flower-o'-the-Corn the pain of the Greater Question. She had demanded of Yvette a permit to visit Maurice Raith, and even that light mocking spirit could not refuse the girl the thing she asked so simply, but with a very world of agony expressed in her eyes and the compression of her lips.

But Yvette privately modified her acquiescence by a determination to be present unseen, and her friendship with Monsieur Bechet assured her as to the possibility of carrying out her intention. She simply gave directions that Maurice Raith should be put into one of those "cells of observation," provided with a "spy-hole" arranged at such a distance from the floor that it cannot be closed up from within, even if discovered by the prisoner whose conduct is to be watched. They are common devices in all ancient French prisons, and, indeed, are not unknown even in others belonging to countries equally civilised, and in houses of detention of a later date than the dawn of the eighteenth century.

Now, Maurice Raith, since the day when he had been deprived of the society of Pastor Wellwood, and yet more of the visits of Patrick Wellwood's daughter, had permitted himself to sink into such

a state of melancholy as the mere fear of death would have been wholly unable to create in him.

He submitted to the military perquisitions and confrontations with the silent readiness of a good soldier. He was well aware that, tried by such a tribunal as the secret military one which had been constituted, the mere fact of being taken out of uniform in the centre of the dominions of King Louis, was enough to ensure his being promptly shot.

He saw no way out, but in itself the thought of death did not affray him greatly. After all, one must die, and there is no quicker or more soldier-like way out of the inevitable than that prescribed by a drum-head court-martial and carried into execution by a well-selected firing party.

No, it was not that which lay heavy on his heart. Of a certainty no! What then?

Well, he did not believe it, of course. He could not. He would be a hound and unworthy of the love of the honestest and truest girl in the world if he believed one word of the tale. But it was whispered that Mistress Frances Wellwood was of a certainty marvellously high in favour with the Marshal. His guards retailed the matter to him with such emendations as occurred to them. They thought it would interest him. They knew—no one better—the old soldier's reputation. Of course, they all agreed, marriage has a marvellous effect on some men.

Perhaps—and then, on the other hand, perhaps not!

Maurice angrily bade them hold their evil tongues, whereat they shrugged their shoulders, and marvelled at his lack of taste in gossip. They liked theirs as they liked their wine, hot and spiced.

But, at all events, a genuine surprise was on the

way to Maurice Raith. He was moved to a better room—that is, from the prisoner's point of view. For instead of a narrow slit shutting off a slither of sky, like the paring from a wand cut from a last year's pollard-willow, he had a wide oblong window in a recess—cross-barred with huge iron bars, it is true, but framing as in a picture, the glorious valley of the Tarn. His eyes were filled with its sweet serenity, its tranquil beauty, and the suggestions of eternity as the river, disentangling itself from among the hills, passed on, like the life of man, beyond the ken of prisoners who only regard it through the barred windows of life.

The door of the cell opened, and the tall erect figure of Patrick Wellwood came in, with his accustomed graciousness of dignity, the long hair now grown white as snow, which once had glanced as the raven's wing, and that uncertain orb, brown as the peat-water after a spate in the Glen of Trool, which, to those who loved him, added to rather than detracted from the charm of his appearance.

Maurice Raith rose to greet him. His aspect was solemn, yet there was a kind of exaltation about him, too, like one who is the messenger of the King to a subject. Religion, true and undefiled, seemed to enter every house with him. Sole among all the men whom Maurice Raith knew, the chaplain had carried to the confines of old age the simplicity, the ardours, and, equally discernible, the weaknesses of a child. For instance, he liked sweet things, and habitually carried a couple of lumps of sugar in his waist-pocket.

From him Maurice learned that every little child is a Christ, and that he who keeps longest that child-like nature apart from the world, and untouched by those things that are evil, is likest that young

man of Nazareth in Galilee, whose name was entered in the enrollment books sent up to Cæsar Augustus by Cyrenius, his Syrian Proconsul, under the name of Jesus Bar-Joseph, carpenter's son, of the house and lineage of David.

Patrick Wellwood noways prided himself upon any superiority to other men. He had the higher standard of comparison. And, since his Lord and Master had withdrawn Himself from His disciples' sight upon a golden evening cloud, and heaven opened no more to let His servants see Him stand in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle, Patrick Wellwood was well content to compare himself to the child whom his Master had set in the midst. He drew such about his knee. Before he taught them he closed his eyes in prayer, and asked of God that he should be made more like them. It was the first of his maxims of conduct that the wickedest little child was better than the best man the world had seen.

So, burdened with a weighty message, this Christian teacher entered the cell of Maurice Raith. And though the word was in itself dolorous and pitiful to the man Patrick, remembering his love for this youth, yet, beyond the sadness, the ex-chaplain of Ardmillan's regiment saw the massed chorus of the Church triumphant. He heard the gates opened, and the chants of the redeemed come clearer.

Nevertheless, he greeted Maurice briefly, but with all the love of his serene and gentle soul speaking in his eyes. It mattered nothing that one of these clear and gracious orbs halted a little, as if lame. It, as well as the other, saw visions and dreamed dreams, and its owner walked gently, as if he feared to disturb

the strain of those golden harps, to the marching music of which he was completing his earthly pilgrimage.

Then the minister went mechanically to the window, as if drawn thither, and at the sight of the fair river, he made a little movement of wonder with both his hands, which came from his Genevan education. He was in no haste to disclose his message. He was old — this young man about to die was young. He would lead up to that which he had come to impart. Time enough, and he smiled.

"'Oh, to be with Ritchie!'" he thought, quoting his favourite Alexander Peden at the grave of Richard Cameron on Ayr's Moss. Then he added, "What will have come of my little lass? She is too fair and too gentle to be left by her lone in the wilderness of this world."

He stood a little regarding the valley of the Tarn, as it lay in those wondrous glories of sunset, which, written at length, spelt out the jewelled twelve foundations of the New Jerusalem to the writer of the Book of the Revelation.

His lips moved as Maurice came near to watch him, as he might have observed an inspired saint. And, indeed, upon the earth at that moment there was no one more nearly deserving of that name than the little child, grown old but not weary, who wore the grey hairs and charged the ranks of the ungodly at the head of Ardmillan's regiment.

Maurice did not at first hear what he was saying, but presently there came to him, like a breathing from far off, the words, "There the glorious Lord will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams, wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby."

The old man shook back his white locks. "Words of

marvel!" he said, "none like them. A dweller in courts, a councillor of Kings was this Isaiah—whence had this man this wisdom?"

"Ah," he went on without thinking of Maurice, "I mind me. Yet again the prophet takes up the word: 'For the Lord is our Judge. The Lord is our Lawgiver, the Lord is our King. He will save us!'"

He turned quickly to the young man, who stood with a certain look of awe on his face. Maurice Raith was as other men of his profession and nation. He took as little as he could of the stern theology which was dominant at the time. But the life beyond life, which was so real in this minister, held and yet daunted him. A godly man is always great—even to the most complete of Laodiceans. Doubt not that Gallio was, in his heart of hearts, immensely impressed with Paul, though he laughed all the more heartily for that when his Greeks of Achaia drew the broad-hemmed skirts of Sosthenes, chief ruler of the synagogue, about his ears, and with resounding thwacks beat him joyously before the judgment-seat.

"Maurice," said Patrick Wellwood, his voice sinking to a gentle murmur, so low that even the eager watcher at the spy-hole could not catch it, "you see all that?" (He pointed as he spoke to the dying gold and purple and blue which decked as with a garment the dying day.)

"Have you ever seen the King in His beauty?" he inquired; "have you beheld the land that is very far off?"

Maurice Raith blushed, as if the reflections of the tinted hills were colouring his face.

"Sir," he said, remorsefully, "I am a soldier. I do not know. I fear I have not thought so much of these things as I ought. But I was taught to say a

prayer when I was a little lad and—and at least—I have not forgotten that!"

The old Christian gentleman nodded his head slowly, and his smile became of almost incredible sweetness and wistfulness.

"It is well, boy," he said; "see—it grows dusk apace! The river has lost its light. It darkens—that shadow yonder—see how it creeps up and up! Only the tops of the mountains are red and glorious. Maurice Raith, your life is like that. Lad of my heart, the Land of the Final Glory is not very far off from you this night!"

And he turned his eyes away. They were not full of tears, but rather held in them a rich and tender glow caught from the last threads of the sunset. He put his hands on the young man's shoulders. Then he slid one arm about his neck.

Maurice Raith, the soldier, the staff officer of my Lord Marlborough, felt himself turning into a child again. It was in his eyes that the tears stood—not by any means those of fear, but to think that a man so great and holy should be so tender to such as he.

"Then I am to die, sir?" he said.

The old minister paused before he answered. He seemed in that moment to pass from the Old Testament to the New.

"Let not your heart be troubled," he said very gently, divining the thought of Maurice Raith's inmost soul. "He who said 'Fear not, little flock!' will raise up an arm for our little one to lean on when this old sapless faggot shall fall to the ground."

For Patrick Wellwood, knowing nothing of spiders, their webs, their spy-places, and casual spinnings, moved simply and largely among such, thinking the best and doing the best, even as from Galilee to Judæa

and athward Samaria, passed that Carpenter's Journeyman who was in all things his Master.

So, knowing that this young man loved his daughter, he knew also, that being told he must die, his first thought would assuredly be of her.

"There is my aunt at Castle Raith," said Maurice, slowly, as if meditating. "She also is an angel of God—with, in addition, the sharp tongue of a woman. But she would love her. If—if this should happen——"

He stopped for want of fitting words. He had not the minister's gift—the gift of those who read much in the great Book of Style. Ah, if they only knew, those others, they would read the Book for that alone—as contrarywise many a poor tired soul, travel-tired, and tossed about, does for other profit—sometimes, alas! profitless, because, after all, a book is only a book.

"Yes," said the minister, "it is well thought on—but yet I know not. She might find this Christian woman of whom you speak a very Naomi, and Frances might be in her need a Ruth to cleave unto her. But, though you are a young man, it is not hid from you, that sometimes the best women are not the better of being too continually together. Their Zion songs are set on different keys, and the result is the discord which makes even sweet bells jangle out of tune!"

He thought a little while, looking out at the twilight and the deep sapphire blue of the mountain-tops against a golden orange mist.

"No," he said, "it is better to leave it to the Lord. I have a little money in safe hands—not much—but enough, which would be hers if anything——"

"But listen, I have no one—no one," broke in Maurice Raith eagerly; "my aunt has her own dowry,

slender, but sufficient, and the use of Castle Raith till she dies. Let it be my happiness to leave all I possess to—her whom I love—who has taught me to love."

"No, no—I beseech you," said the minister, almost shrinkingly.

"It is a safeguard, and, moreover, it is my last request!" said the young man. "Do not deny me. It is all I ask of you."

He sat down and wrote the simplest of wills, leaving everything of which he died possessed to Frances Wellwood, sole daughter of Patrick Wellwood, late chaplain in Ardmillan's regiment. My Lord Marlborough was to execute the will, the titles and values being presently in his hands.

"He has the repute of being one who grasps at money," said Maurice, looking up, "but I, who have the best reason to know, think him, in all private affairs, a man of strict honour."

It was with some difficulty that the chaplain was induced to put the simple holograph into his pocket, shaking his head meantime and sighing.

"It misdoubts me sore," he said, "that this is a distrusting of God's providence."

Maurice saw his opportunity.

"Yes," he said, "it may be so when there is only a man's self concerned, but what does your Scripture say of these little ones, 'whose angels do always behold the face of God'?"

The favourite quotation of his aunt came to Maurice with a happy fitness.

The minister's face changed suddenly. It was as if a lamb of the flock had suddenly rebuked the shepherd. Almost mechanically he gave the answer.

"'Woe unto him through whom the offence cometh. It were better for him that a mill-stone were hanged

about his neck, and he were cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones!' "

Patrick Wellwood thought a while, his eyes misty with the tears that now welled up for the first time.

"*Habet!*" he said.

It was the old fencing phrase when an adversary's thrust got home, remembered from the time when he was an adept in that exercise. He turned to Maurice Raith with a new feeling in his heart towards him—respect being now superadded to the former tenderness.

"You have done that which the young rich man would not do," he said, "you have given freely all that of which you are possessed. Verily, saith the Lord, you are not far from the Kingdom of Heaven!"

Maurice Raith smiled sadly, shaking his head with the strange lucidity of those to whose lives a period is put.

"Ah," he said, "I have only given it, being about to die, to the woman I loved, that she might not utterly forget me. For the sake of human love alone I have done this thing!"

"Of that," said the minister, "I take it not on myself to judge. I leave God (who is Love) to redd up the matter. Methinks He will not be backward to say, 'To him who loved much, much also shall be forgiven!' "

CHAPTER XLIII.

Eve and Lilith.

The door of the cell opened noiselessly and Flower-o'-the-Corn stood regarding her father and her lover. The old man was bestowing upon the younger in all solemnity the same Aaronic benediction which in superfluity of naughtiness Yvette had pronounced mockingly over Cavalier and herself, as a witch might repeat the creed backwards.

At the spy-hole above the eye of the silent watcher became more fixed and—doubt not—the smile more contemptuous. For the red pulsating heart of the mystery was now to be opened in section, and Yvette, having schemed so much and lied so often, would have felt that she had spent herself in vain, had she not been present to witness the parting which the cunning of her brain had brought about and the glamour of her beauty hastened.

For that was not true which she had said to Jean Cavalier, that Patrick Wellwood knew and approved of the marriage. The two men who stood there hand in hand were ready for death, come when it might. They would have shared it between them simply, like a draught of water. But this delicate woman, walking daintily, clad in scarlet, had a far more terrible thing than dying in her heart.

She was indeed to take away the bitterness of death

from Maurice Raith, but how ? By putting something in its place which would be a thousandfold more bitter.

Now in the great things of life (which, be it known to all, are not battle, murder, and sudden death, but hope deferred, love rejected, faith broken, the dread common ill of child-bearing, the yet more common awful ill of children who bring down grey hairs in sorrow to the grave), women are a thousandfold more brave than men. When the stones of life's sanctuary, the precious stones which make the temple of our happiness, are poured out in the top of every street, who sit with their heads beween their knees ? *We men.* And who are they that, with bared arm and the set face of workmen needing not to be ashamed, labour to build up again the Temple despoiled, the Holy of Holies profaned, the hearthstone made desecrate ? *The women whom God hath given us !* Bow the head, spread abroad the hands, cast dust ! They are greater than we, and it is meet and good that we should be ashamed before them.

So in That Day, according to the Word, shall many an unbelieving husband be sanctified by the faith of the wife—saved by it, even from his own weakness and from his own sin. And to this, not the fool or the weakling, but the strong men and the good men shall say, "Amen." And for this also shall these women be arrayed in the robes of fine linen clean and white, which is the righteousness of the saints. Come up higher, Frances Wellwood ! Though you come to your lover's prison having upon you the scarlet robe of Delilah, the woman who hath pleased many, yet about you is the whiteness of that City, which one sometimes sees in a dream of the night—faint, far, and impossible to be reached, beyond the confines of the Lands of Sleep ; or, more rarely, perhaps, but also more vividly,

as from a high city window we look over the hives of mankind at some thrilling and majestic dawn, pregnant with Eternity, the very fear in our hearts sworn evidence of the existence of a God.

At sight of Frances Maurice Raith and Patrick Wellwood faced each other a moment, each imploring the other to silence. They thought that the girl before them did not know !

And she came forward smiling ; so that, being but men, they were deceived, and did not see the under-glitter of tears in her eyes. But the woman at the espial-niche in the wall saw. For she was a woman, and, according to her condition, wise.

Yet the old-man child beneath and his daughter, the maid-child, standing in the doorway, were wiser than she. For when the eternal day-books are added up, and the ledgers checked, only the simple, the singly-loving, the utterly true, shall be accounted wise. Of whom were Frances and Patrick Wellwood. And these two bade fair to draw after them into that same wisdom of simplitciy one Maurice Raith, sometime a light-heart adventurer and follower of a camp where smplicity and singleness of heart were but little in favour.

Maurice sprang up and came towards Flower-o'-the-Corn, his arms outspread. She held back a little from him, with a gesture which he took for shyness in the presence of her father, but which the watcher up above knew to be the thought that soon she must break the news to her lover—that she stood before him the affianced of another.

Nevertheless, because the heart was not yet strong enough within her, and also because she salved her conscience with the thought that the time was not yet, she put up her lips to be kissed as their custom had been at meeting and parting.

"For this time I will leave you, my son," said Patrick. "I think there is nothing more to be said. The God of Jacob bless you now."

"*And afterwards*," he added, beneath his breath, as he turned and went out.

Up at the watcher's coign of vantage the dark subtle eyes glittered. Never had the Spider, sitting in the darkness, assisted at a scene which interested her so much as this. Better than either of them, she knew what was coming. Like some baleful beautiful divinity, she sat there with the cords of destiny which she herself had spun in her hand, till the moment when she would break them off short, or spitefully ravel them into a hopeless tangle.

As the minister went out the guardian of Maurice's prison, who had been warned to care well for his comfort, entered. He set on the little table along with the inkstand, the goosequills, and the sheets of paper, the two great candelabra, which Monsieur Bechet only supplied to his best-paying patients. Then he went and brought in from some store-place an armful of faggots, part of which he put on the andirons, pulled down the massive grille to make them burn better, and with the well-trained accuracy and silence of a domestic servant betook himself out.

Maurice Raith and Flower-o'-the-Corn were left alone. Alone, that is, save for a pair of interested eyes, great and dark, which watched them narrowly from among the rafters. Verily the wise man spoke truth when he said that the spider taketh hold with her hands and is in King's palaces.

Each of these young people thought that the one held a great secret close shut up from the other. Maurice imagined that Flower-o'-the-Corn did not know that he was to die. Frances, on the other hand, thought

that she alone knew that he was to live. In these circumstances it is hard to talk of indifferent things, harder even to return upon the inexhaustible lover's litany of mutual unworthiness, or Gaudeamus of happy admiration.

So instead they sat hand in hand on the seat by the window-sill. The lighting of the candles had almost shut out the prospect. But still there lingered a faint luminous glow, orange with an ærial russet through it, splashed broadly behind the Causses.

"Yonder," said Flower-o'-the-Corn, softly pointing to where over the Larzac the silver throne of Cassiopeia glittered, "up yonder is where we first loved each the other."

Then in a moment it came to her that she was cruel to call up such memories, considering what she had come to tell. But Maurice had his answer ready.

"No, little one," he said, tenderly, "not there, but far to the northward, under the paws of the bear! There is where I first loved you—on the Namur cornfield, when the very cornflowers were not half so blue as your eyes."

He sighed, thinking that he must tell her now.

And she sighed, thinking that now she must tell him.

While above them, at her place of espionage, Yvette smiled a yet more bitter smile.

* * * * * *

It had to come at last, and it came in this wise. Had Frances been the spinner of webs, who plotted her plots, and carried them out to the letter, who laid her lines by rule and told her lies by measure, every word would have been studied beforehand, each effect calculated, each touch employed with the skill of an artist in emotions.

But it was not so with Frances Wellwood.

All suddenly she fell down before Maurice, laid her head upon his knees, and burst into tears.

I am not sure, after all, that Yvette could have done better. Indeed, that lady who, among her few virtues, retained a certain feeling for fair play and could appreciate a well-played scene, clapped the points of her fingers daintily together in token of silent applause. The gods were satisfied, or, at least, the expert critic who occupied their gallery.

"Frances, Frances, what is it?" cried Maurice, in quick surprise; "have they told you? Do you know?"

The girl's sobs alone answered him.

"Dearest, I do not care," he cried, losing all dignity; "for myself it matters nothing, so long as you are well cared for! In time you will be happy. I—I have been talking it over with your father!"

Frances sat up suddenly, and gazed at him in amazement, the tears still running freely down her cheeks.

"Not matter?" she gasped, utterly taken aback, "if—if—I am well taken care of. You have been talking it over with my father?"

"My dearest," he said, "believe me, a soldier has often to face as much. I have stood a dozen times where now I stand. I am a man, remember. What does anything matter to me, a soldier, so long as you are safe and happy. And, after all, you will be well cared for, and, though all will not be for us as we had expected—yet, you know, dearest, things seldom turn out as one hopes——"

Flower-o'-the-Corn rose to her feet and stood back from him. He was certainly taking the matter but little to heart, if he were willing so easily to resign her to another. Could it be—that which Yvette had so strenuously instilled into her—that all men were alike in this thing? That their love was only for a little—

the froth upon the poured wine, that winks a moment and is gone—the flower of the poppy which the first gust of the *mistral* sends skipping over the parapet into the Rhone?

With other men, perhaps, it might be so, but not with Maurice Raith. She softened to him even as she thought. She had tried him.

He went on more firmly, assured that she knew all.

"After the second letter from the King," he continued, "I could expect nothing else. It would have been the same if an officer of the Maréchale de Montrevel, or any soldier of King Louis, had been taken in time of war assisting and stirring up a rebel Catholic population in England or Ireland. Yes, and your father, the truest, simplest, justest man I have ever known, would have judged it right. I myself would have judged it right! I must die, that is all."

As he was speaking the face of the girl had gradually run through a whole series of expressions—wonder, lack of comprehension, doubt, fear, and, lastly, the most absolute terror, as she realised that she had yet all her work to do. He only knew that he must die, not that he was condemned to live without her. Frances owned to herself that if the choice had then been given to her, she would have chosen to die with him. But she had passed her word, made her choice to save him. It was for his sake, and she must go through with it.

"Frances, dearest, be brave!" he said, smiling, and catching her in his arms, thinking that she was going to faint, "See,—I am brave. Help me also to be brave. For at a time like this a man always depends upon the woman he loves. You will not fail me, I know, best-beloved!"

There was the light of a great love on the face of Flower-o'-the-Corn.

"No," she said; "no, as God sees me, I will not fail you. You shall not die. I have sworn it. I will give my life for yours. It is accepted—this my sacrifice. The King has given his sanction. You do not understand! And—and—oh, I do not know how I am to tell you!"

And up in the right-hand corner, behind the dusky beams, in her hidden place of espial, Yvette rejoiced. She felt repaid for all her difficulties overcome, all her webs spun and broken, all her failures and all her mistakes. These two whom she hated were drinking together a full cup, vinegar and gall mingled with the waters of a Marah thrice embittered.

"What is it, beloved?" said Maurice; "you speak of saving me, of giving your life for mine. Of that I know nothing. I am to die! It is the daily chance of a soldier—hard, certainly for me, who have so recently found you, but otherwise—well——"

"Oh! you do not understand, you will not—" cried poor Flower-o'-the-Corn, sobbing her heart out on his breast, "the price is that I am to marry Jean Cavalier. They have made me promise—I am to do it to save your life—but not till you are safe over the frontier, and on an English ship. Only I am to remain in their hands as a hostage!"

Maurice stood suddenly erect, and clenching his fist shook it at the unanswering heavens, which, indeed, had little enough to do with the matter.

"*It is that woman!*" he cried, fiercely. Then he added in a lower tone, "It serves me right!"

"What woman?" asked Flower-o'-the-Corn, for a moment stopping her sobs to look up in his face, her agony mixed with wonder.

"That—(he paused on the verge of a word plain and Biblical—while at her spy-hole, Yvette, who had a

ready if somewhat perverted sense of humour, was compelled to push her handkerchief into her mouth and bite hard to keep down her laughter) — "that *woman!*" he repeated again, finding no satisfactory paraphrase. "She has laid a trap for all our feet. We have been as gulls before her, as geese on the mere, that follow the decoy to their own destruction."

He struck his hand hard against his head.

"Oh, what a fool, Maurice Raith, what an utter fool!"

And he was silent in the contemplation of his own folly. It was certainly a large subject, and its adequate representation even to himself might have taken some time.

But Frances interrupted him.

"You are wrong, Maurice," she said, quietly, "if you mean Yvette; she has been kind—more than kind. She has taken all the trouble of obtaining a conditional pardon. You will be sent under escort of the Marshal's troops over the frontier into Spain. Your servant Billy Marshall and his wife Bet will go with you, and as soon as you are safe on an English ship at Barcelona (where there are plenty), one of these two will bring me back a message that you are safe. Then, and only then, I will fulfil my promise!"

She smiled up at him through her thickening tears.

"Do not be afraid for me," she said, "he will be kind to me. He is a good man! I do not wish you to be grieved! That hurts!"

And then, still smiling, her strength, wonderful up to this point, failed her for the first time, and she fainted quietly away in his arms.

CHAPTER XLIV.

"Kiss Me, My Husband."

Perhaps it was that the Spider had had enough of watching the game which she herself played so matchlessly well. Barring one or two points at the first, she could not but feel that Flower-o'-the-Corn had done no justice to her part. Yvette could have brought Maurice to the agony with so much more skill, and as to the fainting—it is really too antiquated—the resource of the ill-trained amateur. Bah! she would go down and play the scene out herself.

So without more thought than the mere resolution, Yvette drew her capuchin over her head, assumed (as easily as she had donned the hood) an air of anxiety and haste, and descended into the chamber of Maurice Raith's imprisonment.

The faithful Monsieur Bechet was lingering at the far end of the corridor, his hands in his pockets, thinking doubtless his own thoughts. He was, nevertheless, keeping a sharp eye upon all exits and entrances—though purely, of course, from a professional point of view. Really he was only interested in a little cupboard in which, along with ropes, halters, and thumbscrews, he kept sundry curious waters for the solace of his lonely hours of waiting upon the pleasure of others. He had made more than one visit there already and the key, a delicate little steel engine of much mechanical

intricacy, was already in his hand, when above him he heard the light footsteps of Madame la Maréchale descending the stairs from her chamber of espionage.

Now M. Bechet was much too well bred and too thoroughly in subordination to his superior officers (and their superior wives) to ask any questions as to the success of her projects. He was there to lock and unlock doors, and to await the lady's pleasure. So long as his prisoners remained under his roof and on the right side of his stanchioned doors, till such time as he received due receipt and discharge for their bodies, dead or alive—that was all Monsieur Bechet, as a good guardian of the King's peace, cared for.

Accordingly he admitted Yvette with a simple bow and smile into the chamber, which since Maurice entered into it she had regarded only from above.

A thought struck her as she descended. What she had done, others might do also—an officer of police was only a policeman after all.

"Stay here," she said; "I shall not be long! And perhaps I may have occasion to return again above. In that case I shall know the way myself!"

For Mistress Yvette, having spied so well, did not intend to furnish a free exhibition to any other—save and except the two for whose benefit she was about to take the leading part in an unrehearsed drama.

She entered to find Maurice and Flower-o'-the-Corn with their positions unchanged.

"'*That woman*,' indeed!" she muttered between her teeth, "I will teach this man to call me 'that woman'!"

And there is no doubt that this lady meant what she said. Flower-o'-the-Corn was still in Maurice's arms, and he was mourning over her, kissing her pale face passionately the while, a method of recovery

from temporary syncope which, though indubitably ancient, is not in accordance with modern medical treatment, nor recommended by the faculty.

At the entrance of Yvette Maurice Raith turned upon her, hot with wrath and fury, holding Frances still closer in his arms and looking as if he would have rent the intruder limb from limb.

Yvette stood smiling in the doorway.

"What is the matter with my friend," she said, "with the dear Mademoiselle Wellwood?"

She pronounced the surname in the French manner with the prettiest labial lisp, with which at another time Maurice would have been delighted.

But this pretension of innocence on Yvette's part was much too plain. That he was threatening, as it were, his own communications, even cutting off his path of retreat, was of no weight in comparison with the need which Maurice felt of expressing himself completely to the traitress Yvette, whose cunning scheming had brought them to this.

"What is the matter with her?" he cried, indignantly. "That is not for you to ask. No—stand off—do not touch her! She is too pure for such hands as yours. Do not even look at her! Do not breathe upon her. I would rather see her dead than aided by you!"

He fairly hissed the words in his wrath.

Yvette affected a kind of humorous terror.

"Please, Monsieur the Englishman, do not kill me with your glances! Ah, I remember the time, not so long ago, either, when I knew a young English soldier who looked quite otherwise at poor Yvette Foy! But at any rate, if I am not worthy to touch her, would it not be better if you yourself laid her down on a bench, or on the couch yonder, and poured a little

cold water over her face and neck ! The most perjured of traitresses—even '*that woman*'—may be permitted, in the name of common-sense, to give advice to a man who knows no better than to march about with a fainting girl in his arms as if she were a puppet doll at a raree show ! "

She paused a moment to let her words sink in, then added :

" Or perhaps you would prefer (and indeed it would be much more proper) that the *fiancé* of Mademoiselle Wellwood, Colonel Jean Cavalier of the King's army, should be sent for to recover her."

She laughed impishly, and at that very moment Maurice felt Flower-o'-the-Corn move in his arms. Was it Cavalier's name that stirred her ? Had it reached through the glamour of faintness which still left her heart deathly sick within her ? Or—but the supposition is untenable and not in accordance with the character of such a girl—had the young woman actually been conscious for a longer or a shorter time, without signalling for Maurice Raith to release her from that imperious pressure ? Who shall decide ? At all events, quick as an echo, at the name of Jean Cavalier, Flower-o'-the-Corn returned to herself.

She stared about her wildly, and when she saw Yvette she trembled from head to foot with something of the same fear without which Jean Cavalier never approached the wife of Nicholas de Baume.

Yvette smiled at this evidence of her power. All power of every sort was dear to her. She would rather that anyone should feel for her an actual physical repulsion than that he should be indifferent to her. Indeed, as in electricity, the power of fascination exercised by such a woman as Yvette has always two poles, often very close together. Attraction and

repulsion may both be seen at work, and not infrequently upon the same individual.

Maurice would have laid Flower-o'-the-Corn down on his couch, but at the sound of the name of Jean Cavalier she put the young man to the side with a movement of her hand and fronted Yvette.

"I have told him!" she said.

"Well, and what does he say?" smiled Madame la Maréchale. "Glad to escape death on such easy terms, I warrant him! A soldier is a soldier all the world over!"

It was hardly playing the game, Yvette knew that very well, but the sight of Frances Wellwood in the arms of Maurice and—(the suspicion is that of Yvette alone)—unwilling to quit them, had aroused in her all the baser angers of her nature. She could not help taunting these two who were in her power. It was foolish, she knew, and killed the mouse instead of keeping it to play with comfortably for an hour or two, but all the same, she could not help it.

"You think," she said, contemptuously, to Maurice Raith, "that it is for the sake of your *beaux yeux*, my friend, that I have brought this thing to pass. Not at all! I am married to a man who is worth a dozen of you any day. If in anything I have over-stepped the bounds allotted to the wives of Monsieur the butcher and Monsieur the baker and Monsieur the candlestick-maker—it has been in my husband's service. And no man can say I have at any time been other than his true wife and faithful servant. I will call him up if you choose, and you can make your plaint to him, an it liketh you. Think not that I am afraid of you!"

"But as for you, sir, it is not for the sake of your life alone (which, as you are well aware, was forfeit as soon as you set foot across the French frontier,—

no, not for your excellent sake, M. le Capitaine What's-your-name, waggoner of Roche-à-Bayard and Hoo, not even for the sake of the staff uniform, nor the yet more becoming costume of the Maison Rouge, that I have disarranged myself at all. But because I would save this girl from death,—because I would save her father—a good man according to his lights and his thoughts (which are not mine), and because I desire to save all this people of the Cevennes from a bloody and desolating war, such as you and other firebrands and fanatics would have kept alight among them! For these reasons I have done what I have done! There, are you answered?"

Then she turned towards Flower-o'-the Corn.

"Frances Wellwood, I bid you come with me, who alone have gone out of my way to save from death and dishonour both you and those I thought dear to you! Or do you still desire to hear a certain crackling detonation to-morrow morning, and a few minutes afterwards observe the agreeable carcass of this young man being carried past to the Protestant cemetery of Millau, where by grace of a paternal Government it might be possible to have him buried? Which do you choose?"

Maurice gripped his finger-nails into his palms, and only the knowledge that a call from Yvette would bring up the soldiers of the Marshal prevented him springing upon the tormentor, and clasping that fair white throat once and for all in a grip of steel.

"I wonder" (the thought came to him) "would those red lips speak truth for once, even in the death agony?" Then Flower-o'-the-Corn turned her about to Maurice, and all the anger died sharply out of his eyes. He was utterly swayed and humbled by what he saw there.

"Dearest," she said, smiling at him through a mist

of tears, "do your part—yours is easy and soon done. Mine will be the longer in the doing, but I will do it! She—(Frances pointed with open contempt to where Yvette stood smil ng her ironic smi'e)—she speaks part of the truth. I do this for your sake, because I love you. How much, only a true maid can know—not a woman like her!"

(Here Flower-o'-the-Corn caught herself up from hasty speech with a rapid intake of breath.)

"No, I do not mean that! Who am I that I should judge another?"

She went on without giving him time to answer.

"Good-bye, beloved! I shall not see you again. You will go far away, but you will not forget me! No, not ever. Nor shall I forget, though I am wedded to another, though I lie by his side night by night, and every night till the day, the marvellously glad day when I am taken. And God, who orders all things, who has ordered this (or else granted power, for a time, to some devil of hell to work his will), knoweth better than any that we can never forget. He will not be angry that I think of you, that I continue to love you. For in soul and spirit I shall be your wife, and keep all that is eternal of me, all that is immortal, all that does not go back to the worm and the sod, virgin for you—yes, for you alone, my love and my life!'

As she spoke she clasped him about the neck with both hands, oblivious even of the presence of Yvette and of her smile, which, indeed, had become somewhat less pronounced and ironical.

Flower-o'-the-Corn looked up at Maurice, and her eyes were deep wells of love and faith.

"Kiss me—my husband!" she said.

CHAPTER XLV.

Good Catholics.

Down on the broad swards by the Tarn side were the stir and bustle of preparation. To the left lay the royal regiments, mostly foot grenadiers of the Red House of the King. They occupied the narrow neck of the valley where it turns up towards the Dourbie, and the dangerous neighbourhood of the Hill Folk, presently in arms against his Majesty.

To the right, on the wider straths, were the local levies—men who, but for their uniform and the fear of the rope and cross-trees of the Provost Marshal of the camp, might just as well have been enrolled as franctireurs, or even Cadets of the Cross.

Between these encampments, and apart from both, were the recently recruited, and still far from dependable regiments of Jean Cavalier. It was among these last that the stir was most pronounced. And when a haughty stalking sergeant of the Royal House met a private of the new corps with the gloss yet on his buttons, he ceased for a moment twisting his moustachios, and inquired what was the mighty pother in the encampment of the Psalm-singers?

This name had been adopted by a sort of mutual consent after a score of others had been tried, and sundry mountaineers had shown their metal in single combat with their insulters on several occasions. The

usual amount of "hazing" common to all new troops coming late into a well-established army had, of course, been their fate. But a tendency to settle all scores on the spot, generally with a long butcher's killing knife, had proved a strong discouragement to the rougher forms of wit, and in no way detracted, in the long run, from the popularity of the Psalm-singers.

"Our commander is to be married to-day, and by the King's own orders!" quoth the man interrogated, as soon as he was assured that no further insult was intended, adding immediately, "And to the best, the most beautiful and most accomplished girl in the world."

"Bah!" said he of the Maison Rouge, "the Lady Maréchale for my money! I love none of your pale washed-out beauties."

"Mademoiselle is the daughter of a great man and a learned!" boasted the Camisard.

"A Genevan preacher!" said the other, sneeringly.

The long Camisard knife was in the disputant's hand in a moment.

"I will fight you for it," he said, promptly. "I maintain that the girl is a good girl, and that her father is a great man! Will you come with me down behind the willows by the island?"

The sergeant of the Maison Rouge laughed good-humouredly.

"Praise to the saints, I was not made so hot in the head as you sheep-skin covered Psalm-singers," he said; "have it your own way and let me go mine. I have other fish to fry than to fight for no cause at all. I daresay that the girl is all that you say. Or at least, your commander thinks so now, which is as good."

In the great tent in the hollow the ceremony was to be performed. Afterwards, to please the King, they were to repair to the church along with the *curé-*

doyen of Millau, and the civil authorities of the High Cevennes, but first (to the wonder of all) they were to be united according to the true Calvinist ritual and by the father of the bride himself.

Maurice Raith was up and over the frontier six good days ago, and every moment till that morning his messenger had been expected in vain. But, apparently, Billy the gipsy was now really on his way, hot-foot from Aigues Mortes, whither he had come by ship from Barcelona, with a letter from Maurice Raith, dated on board Her Majesty's ship the *Royal Dane*, announcing his safe arrival and reception by the English officers. So, at least, the news went in the camp.

It was the hour for the sacrifice, and Yvette, who had schemed and worked so keenly to bring this about, had for one moment a spasm of remorse when she looked upon the pale quiet of the countenance of Flower-o'-the-Corn. One thing annoyed her. The gipsy had not yet put in an appearance, but a swift horseman, bearing despatches to the Marshal, had passed him on the way, and his arrival was hourly expected. She felt it hard to postpone the consummation of her schemes a single hour.

And because there was still a barrier to be removed, Yvette watched more and more nervously for the coming of Billy Marshall as the hour of the wedding drew near. No bride was ever more eager than she. Yvette it was who had ordered and seen to the arrangements of the marriage banquet. She it was who had provided the plenitude of flowers, an unusual feature at that time, with which the tables were decorated. She had even obtained rare fruits from a distance, and the idea that all these combinations of genius might be spoiled by the non-arrival of a mere gipsy with a letter,

sufficed to make her unwontedly fretful and difficult to please.

The Marshal himself had early been obliged to abandon his military pavilion for the occasion, and to retire to the bosom of his oldest friend and brother officer, who shrugged his shoulders in sympathy with his superior's woes—being also a married man with a wife considerably younger than himself.

"The whole place is given up to marrying and giving in marriage," grumbled Nicholas de Baume. "I declare there is not so much space as would suffice to set down the breadth of a well-made man upon, without encountering such quantities of needles and pins as would make him when he arose little better than an exceedingly fretful porcupine."

Honest Colonel Verlat shook his head with comprehending melancholy, and told the tale of his sufferings upon one occasion when his wife had entered into the mysteries of lace-making on her own account.

"And the worst of all," broke in the Marshal, who was paying but small attention, "is the whimsy that this spoilt child of the pastor of Geneva hath taken into her head——"

Colonel Verlat looked up with a quickly stifled growl. *He* knew a quick way with dissenters, and if he had his will he would not have made so great a function of the marrying of their brats. But he also knew better than to say as much to Nicholas de Baume.

The general went his mournful way.

"The lady will not marry at all, if you please, till the writing of the young officer is put into her hand, declaring that he is safe on the English ship. Well, that much was bargained for. But for the other condition she hath sprung on us—it hath been the mischief and all. She will have herself married by her father

in the great tent, before she will go near the church —and all good Catholics are in arms at that."

"The minx!" cried Colonel Verlat, brusquely, "was ever heard such insolence? She should go unblessed if I had my way. To stand up before a heretic and fanatic preacher rather than kneel at the altar of the holy Nôtre Dame of Millau!"

Nicholas de Baume shrugged his shoulders at his companion's bigotry. "Bad enough," he said, "even if a heretic pastor be her father. But, after all, what have you and I, François, to do with priests and pastors, creeds and credos, psalm-singing and paternosters? What in our heart of hearts we want is no more than a quiet fireside, a good glass of sound wine, a hearty companion, not too jovial, and the woman we love in a good and amenable temper when we hear the abbey clock strike the hour of ten! What more do old fellows like François Verlat and Nick de Baume ask of the jade Fortune? Let Pope Innocent and John Calvin, Rome and Geneva, bookworm Pascal and that frothy fellow Bossuet settle their own differences like cats meawling on the roof! A quiet life in the sun and liberty to scratch for fleas when it liketh us, these be the best for old dogs like you and me, François Verlat."

"Thou wert always a pagan, Nicholas," said the Colonel, shaking his head, "and I say it to-day as freely to your face as I did forty years ago at Saint Brieac, when they birched us together for stealing the Abbot's grapes."

"Ah, lad," laughed the Marshal, "every man is a good Christian when his waist is slim and he goes to church to show his uniform off against the pillars as he ogles the girls. That was where you learnt yours. But for me—well, maybe you are right, I never had

much. My favourite toasts went as little to church as they could help, which indeed suited Nicholas de Baume just so much the better."

The Marquis rose to his feet and reached out his hand to the table where lay his accoutrements.

"But, hey, François, give me a haul before you go with this sword-belt. It gets shorter every day, curses on it! A blue plague on the ill-favoured, spavined, master-saddler that made it! There goes the bell. On with your Sunday face, François, and let us go see how true blue Protestants are triced up."

"Hum," said his friend, "I love not the 'barbets.' I think that I will wait till they get to the church."

"Nonsense, man!" cried the Marshal, "that you shall not. You would miss the pick of the fun. There is always a hot chance of it when my wife hath the leading-strings. And as to seeing how Protestants are triced up, there is comfort in this—they are as certain to wish themselves well out of it in three months as ever you and I did, who are both good Catholics. Yet, like us, also, they must e'en make the best of it!"

"I said you were a pagan, Nicholas," repeated the other, "and if you mend not your ways——"

"There goes the second bell, Colonel Verlat! Attention! Eyes to the front! Are you accoutred? Follow your commanding officer!"

As he went Nicholas de Baume chuckled to himself under his breath.

"Always fun where my wife is," he grumbled, with unction; "did I not tell you so, *mon vieux*. You shall see! *Allons!*"

CHAPTER XLVI.

The Night looks into the Pavilion.

They had waited long. Billy Marshall, though often reported on the way, had not arrived. Hope deferred was making hearts sick—not, indeed, as might have been expected, those of the per onages principally concerned, the bride and bridegroom, but rather those of the guests of the marriage feast—who, with hourly sharpening appetites, eyed the preparations in the kitchens and the cooks who, white-aproned and white-bonneted, rushed this way and that, or with hands held horizontally above their brows, looked down the road into the setting sun.

Nevertheless, in spite of all, Billy Marshall delayed his coming. Priests and choristers whispered together or talked huskily of going home. But the fear of the omnipotent Marshal, the representative of the King, was upon them; and besides, they knew that to-morrow the report of the whole would go straight to Versailles.

Meantime the Marshal had despatched courier after courier. They were instructed to bring Maurice Raith's letter, if they could not bring Billy. But the gipsy was more clever than them all. He would go himself and deliver the letter to the young lady, or she would not have it at all. In which case there would be no marriage. They might please themselves.

"Search him, gentlemen of the Red House!" And they searched him, finding tobacco, snuff, and other contraband of war, but not so much as a scrap of writing concealed about his rags.

Being released, Billy Marshall laughed in their faces. Yes, he would accept a horse and set forward, but at his own pace. He was coming, but he was well aware that nothing could be done about him. So, as he explained in villainous French, like the man whom the crowd had come to see hanged, he could afford to take his time.

"Hanged you will be without a doubt!" cried the exasperated Sergeant of the Red House who had been sent to bring him in. "When you get there the Marshal will be in a temper to skin you alive and eat you without salt!"

"Set a Marshal to catch a Marshall!" said Billy, oracularly. "I jaloose that a gipsy is likely to come out of a scrape as well as the best Frenchman that ever drew the breath of life!"

* * * * * *

The upper part of the great military pavilion had been cleared. A table covered with a rich purple velvet cloth had been brought, strictly under the rose, from the sacristy of Our Lady of Millau by the complaisant *curé-doyen*. The thing would please the Marquis, and—what would you? A little holy water and a dash of incense would fumigate soon any lurking Protestantism out of the tissues of velvet and gold.

This, thrown over a plain deal table, made the altar before which Flower-o'-the-Corn and Jean Cavalier were to kneel. Patrick Wellwood had already taken up his position behind it, tall, spare, his white hair falling reverently over his black Genevan gown.

Flower-o'-the-Corn, with a sad peculiarity, had spent the last days mending the rents and holes in it.

Brilliant and distinguished was the company, beyond the wont of even the headquarters of a Marshal of France, which had been drawn together by a desire to witness the marriage of so distinguished a Camisard (now rallied to the service of the King), according to the rites of the Church Protestant.

A part of the pavilion had been curtained off, making an entrance to a smaller *marquee*, and there Flower-o'-the-Corn was waiting—with an actual impatience, the letter which, according to promise, was to come to her from the man whom, for one brief moment, she had clasped in her arms and called her husband.

Through the curtains which separated their *marquee* from the great pavilion there came a yellowish haze of illumination.

"They are lighting up," said Yvette. "I had not thought it was so dark. I wish the gipsy would come! It is infinitely annoying!"

"I wish so, too!" said Flower-o'-the-Corn, very quietly.

"You have changed your mind, then?" said Yvette, laughing. "You will find your Camisard a better and more faithful husband, I trow, than any officer of my Lord Marlborough's staff!"

"I have *not* changed my mind," said Flower-o'-the-Corn, "as you know very well; but—I wish it were over and done with."

"You are not the first in your circumstances who has wished as much!"

"I *am* the first in my circumstances!" said Frances Wellwood, quietly. "And I hope the last also!"

"*But*," she added to herself, under her breath, "*God, who knows all, will forgive!*"

* * * * * *

There was a noise without. Over all arose the keen, far-reaching hillman's shout—half *coo-ee*, half yodel of the Cevenol.

"He has come!" cried Yvette, suddenly alert and radiant, "at last!" She was clad all in red, like a maple leaf turned into a flower by one night of autumn frost, and in her hair, nestled among the weighty black braids, was a single blossom of the pomegranate, the most gorgeous scarlet God has made. Flower-o'-the-Corn was in white, without colour, save for a couple of spots the size of a florin, which burned steadily one on either cheek, high up, where the heart's blood leaped under the fine firm skin. Her ripe-wheat hair, which had first given the girl her name, rippled and swirled, alternately like honey in the comb and gold red in the bar, as you may see them unloading it from Spanish galleons at the quays of Carthagena.

"A pale bride!" whispered the maids who attended on her at command of the Lady Maréchale.

"*I* think she loves the other!" said her friend, sagely.

"They mostly do," replied the first, who was of the order and lineage of her mistress, "not that in the long run it makes a great deal of difference!"

"It would make a great deal of difference to me!" said her friend, a little dolefully, for she had a hope in her heart, of which she had not yet informed her family. *He* was to "demand her hand" if and when he returned from the wars.

"Tut—that does not count—you always were a baby!" said the Maréchale's personal attendant.

"But hark—there they are! We shall need to be

going in now. You are to take the left side of the bride's dress, I the right, and mind, do not let it sag in the centre. Everything depends upon that!"

* * * * * *

Yes, Billy Marshall had come at last. He was waiting, unshaven and unshorn, in front of the pavilion —a strange pivot for all this splendour to turn upon. But the bride had been firm in this, if in nothing else. She would not be married—she would not go to the altar, till from the hands of Billy Marshall, the Kirkcudbright gipsy, the letter of Maurice Raith had passed into hers.

She stood up—fair, pale, motionless, her attitude tense with listening to the tumult without.

"Bid him come in!" she said, and then, as one of the temporary maids-of-honour went to call the messenger into the lesser of the two tents of festival, she added, "And where is—*the other man?*"

It was Yvette who answered her.

"Do you not hear?" she cried, clapping her hands with pleasure. "His people are bringing him up in triumph. Do you hear the White Shirts shouting?"

And through the gay *rataplan* of drums and the blare of trumpets, there pierced the strange fitful chant of the Camisard psalm. Yvette smiled. She had heard it a thousand times. Night and morning it had summoned her from her most interesting occupations, from books which made the blood flush hot to read, from agreeable company, from the composition of the epistles by means of which she had lived the dull days down—letters addressed externally to her maiden aunts. Her father liked her voice, he said. She hummed a bar or two now, accentuating the characteristic grace-notes and the nasal whine—and then laughed bitterly.

Except the Lord do build the house
The builders lose their pain;
Except the Lord the city keep,
The watchmen watch in vain.

The words were French, of course, but of a like rude simplicity with the Scots version, and the effect was the same. The tune was the famous March of Spirit Seguier, to the music of which he went, the soul within him "like a well-watered garden," by way of the torture to the stake.

As Yvette laughed, the flap of the tent was lifted, and the girl who had gone out, first snatching her skirts and lace-edged draperies out of the way of contagion, let into the *marquee* a figure at once tremendous in its power and ridiculous by its flapping rags—Billy Marshall, the Scottish gipsy and promised messenger of Maurice Raith.

Flower-o'-the-Corn set one hand instinctively to her heart, and the red florin-pieces on her cheek faded utterly away. Then she held out the other. The hand of the gipsy met hers fairly, rested there a long moment, and fell again to his side. Yvette would have given half of her kingdom to make sure what it was that passed between them. But she knew that Billy Marshall was not a man to trifle with, standing there free, his weapons ready to his finger-grip, and no other man within calling distance to coerce him. So she had to be content with promising herself that he should be made to speak—afterwards. It did not strike her that it might possibly be somewhat too late—*afterwards*.

The music ceased. There ensued that waiting hush which is often more trying to the nerves than the wildest excitement, that distinctive and peculiar silence which tells that a great multitude is waiting for the appearance of one. The orator hears it in the last

minutes before he faces his audience. The clergyman tastes it in the silence of his vestry after the organ notes have ceased and the verger stands waiting. The murderer knows it as his last toilette is being made, in those slow minutes before he emerges upon that grim silhouette of dark beams which has haunted his dreams for weeks, the raw morning air, the hoarse roar of the crowd surging beneath, and—after certain simple operations—the white face of God, waiting.

But none of these could be more trying than that hush to the nerves of Flower-o'-the-Corn. True, there was Maurice's writing. She had not lived in vain. Also she could feel between her fingers a fine powder, carefully folded, attached according to agreement to the interior page of the letter. After one briefest glance she thrust the whole back into her bosom. She breathed a long sigh. The red flushed up again into her cheek. Her eyes brightened. No, he had not deceived her. All was well.

"You were wrong," whispered the second maid of honour, she of the secret hope; "see—she blushes! She loves him after all!"

But the subtle Yvette was not by any means so well satisfied. There was something behind, something from which she, who had planned all, was shut out. Well, it did not matter, to-morrow she (that is, others for her) would make Billy Marshall speak. And at any rate, long before that Flower-o'-the-Corn would be married as firmly as half-a-dozen officials and the ministers of two religions could do it. Thus at last she would be revenged upon Flower-o'-the-Corn—who had no right to be both younger and fairer than she—who had come so near to losing her the affection—pshaw! at least had caused to waver the attention of her husband, upon the rival who had won and

kept the love of Maurice Raith, delivering, as it were, that young man out of the net spread for him.

Moreover, she would also be revenged upon Maurice Raith, who had been fool enough not to know when he might have been well off. Love him—no, of course not! But all the same had he not kissed her of his own free will? Well then, he must pay. Already she had made him pay! She thought of him writing that letter on the deck of that British ship and laughed. Furthermore, he should pay yet more bitterly. She had not done with Monsieur Maurice Raith. Oh yes, she, Yvette Foy, had a long arm. Providence could bring things to pass, but in her own opinion she made not at all a bad second. It was the hour of her triumph, and she tasted its full sweetness as the maids of honour picked up Flower-o'-the-Corn's train, and the girl herself thrust her hand once more into her bosom to make sure that Maurice Raith's letter and enclosure were in safety.

As for Jean Cavalier, Yvette had no feelings of revenge satisfied, or to be satisfied, against him. One may tread upon a black beetle which gets in the way, but one does not revenge one's self upon it.

The little procession entered the great pavilion about midway its length. On either side, with a clear fair-way in the centre, were assembled the guests of the Marquis and Marquise de Montrevel. Opposite was the door through which, after the bride's entrance, the Marshal himself would lead in the bridegroom.

The time was come. Even the heart of Yvette herself beat a little faster as the trumpets and fifes rang out. The curtain was lifted by a cord from within. A haze of glorious light fronted them, flashing uniforms of blue and scarlet and gold. The massed standards of a score of regiments, the hangings of the state

pavilions of the Maison Rouge itself, barriered pikes in banks and *chevaux-de-frise*, crossed trophies of swords, silken tassels, the Fleur-de-Lys everywhere, splashed in gold on creamy white. Yet louder sang the trumpets. All eyes were upon the two girls. Smiling, Yvette led in the bride. Most of the men judged Yvette to be the loveliest. Even the bridegroom, with the Marshal on his right, secretly thought so. The fierce Camisards peering into the lit spaces as if into the courts of heaven, thought so. Only one or two, women mostly, rare in that vast whirlpool of blazing uniforms, preferred the grave sweetness and pale beauty of Flower-o'-the-Corn.

The two parties moved forward to meet each other in that central aisle that had been kept open with so much difficulty. The Marquis moved back a step. Yvette, with her own smile, radiant with the perfection of triumph, placed the hand of Flower-o'-the-Corn in that of Jean Cavalier.

There was a silence all about as the marriage party moved up the aisle, Frances with her bridegroom leading, Yvette upon the arm of her husband, glancing radiant in the rear of the train-bearers.

In the interval, and just before they reached the altar, covered simply with its purple cloth, upon which was a great ridged cross of gold, Patrick Wellwood in his Genevan gown, and with the book of God in his hand, moved behind it to receive them.

Then, as he lifted up his hands in the first solemn invocation of his religion, the Camisard chaunt came louder from without—weird, fitful, dirgelike, prescient rather of death than of marriage happiness.

> Except the Lord the city keep,
> The watchmen watch in vain.

"For heaven's sake let that whining be stopped!"

said de Montrevel, fiercely ; " I will go myself and order it."

" Hush ! Bide where you are ! " murmured the wife, snatching at his sleeve, with a sudden whitening of the face. " I thought I heard a voice singing—a voice I remember ! "

She turned as if to listen. Patrick Wellwood was raising his voice in sonorous petition.

Suddenly, as Yvette looked, the white wall of the tent was slashed with a gleaming knife from top to bottom, and through the aperture by which the black night looked in—wild, fierce, tremendous, leaped the figure of a man. His long grey hair, matted and dank, fell beneath his shoulders. Madness looked out of his eyes. A glairy foam hung about his lips, which kept up an uncouth muttering.

" I have found them both at once ! " he cried; "he who hath led astray my daughter—he who hath made of her what she is. You—you—you ! " He advanced towards the Maréchal, who stood unmoved, while all about him seemed paralysed at the sudden fearful apparition. " Now I, Martin Foy, will slay you and the woman together ! "

And at the word he precipitated himself towards de Montrevel.

But faster than the flashing of his knife came the movement of Yvette. "My husband! My husband!"

And lo ! with a breaking cry she flung herself fiercely between the assassin and his victim. Her breast, white and heaving under its lace and silk, received the madman's stroke fairly. The blood sprang and fell upon the frosted maple of her wedding garment, as scarlet as itself in the shrine of the altar candles.

" He is my husband ! I love him ! " she cried.

With a hoarse roar the crowd closed in to tear the

murderer to pieces, but with an infinitely fiercer brandishing of his knife and an exultant shout of "I have slain her that played the harlot among her people! To her place let her go!" he disappeared into the gash of blackness through which the stars peered in familiar and distant and chill.

Then Nicholas de Baume, the tears running from eyes that had been dry for forty years, held in his arms the woman who had given her life for his.

Once only did she open her eyes, still dark and passionate and glorious. "I am sorry," she said, looking at Cavalier and Flower-o'-the-Corn. "Do not let them marry. It was my fault."

Something unseen was drowning her life within, for there was little stain upon the stuff of her dress.

"Be pitiful, Nicholas," she said. "Before you slay my father, tell him that I am your wife—that I am your true wife. I loved you, Nicholas. I wish for your sake that I had been—ah, God—God!"

And with that she was gone. At least the leaving of Yvette Foy's life had not wholly misbecome her.

CHAPTER XLVII.

The Hunting of a Man.

"Kill the heretics! Kill! Kill!" cried the men of the Maison Rouge, dashing out into the night like a swarm of angry wasps.

And had it not been for the Catholic officers, most of Cavalier's new troops would have fallen victims to the opinions which they had forsaken. Nay, Jean Cavalier himself was struck at and wounded in the arm. The Maréchal, in the first moments of his terrible grief, hardly noticed anything that went on about him, and it was Colonel Verlat who guided Flower-o'-the-Corn and her father back to the chambers of the Maréchale's quarters, now looking strangely empty and deserted. Scraps of silk and knitting-baskets were strewed about, with feathers and pieces of discarded jewelry. A pretty morning gown hung on a wooden peg with a curious resemblance in its shape to the dead woman's figure.

The Camisard regiments had withdrawn silently and sullenly to their camp, whence by swimming the Tarn and scattering over their native Causses in the darkness, but few remained to hold their leader in countenance in the morning.

But through all the tumult of the sudden assassination and the hubbub of the camp, there were certain who from the first followed doggedly the track of the

murderer. Prominent among these there was that sergeant-major of the Maison Rouge who had so long admired Yvette afar off. There was also of the invited guests one Monsieur Bechet, of the Military Prison, to whom she had scarcely spoken save to make of him her tool. There was a captain of artillery and a young subaltern of foot, to neither of whom had she ever uttered a sentence. Yet these four followed Martin Foy relentlessly over the rough scraps and slaty *debris* —up—up—towards the wild tablelands of the Larzac.

On the way out of the camp the fugitive had rushed a deserted guardhouse, holding his Camisard knife red in his hand. It was a night when a certain slackness of discipline was permissible, and the under-officers had most of them gone off to see the sight down at the great pavilion.

The startled shout of the single sleepy private left in charge was followed by his instant flight. The long-bladed Camisard knife just grazed his shoulder as he scudded under his assailant's arm. Yet he was a brave man, too, and died fighting at Malplaquet as a soldier should. But that astonishing figure, those long snaky locks, that red uplifted knife—well, many are the brave men, awaked suddenly from sleep, who might have done even as did Private Adrien Lunel, of the Montpelier Regiment.

Whereupon, as was known afterwards, the madman helped himself liberally to arms and ammunition. The weight he now carried made him the easier to come up with. For barefoot, on his own native Larzac, and carrying no weight, hardly a wolf-dog could have turned him. But indeed it is now none so sure that escape was the man's purpose.

* * * * * *

It was in the plain midst of the limestone desert of

the largest Causse in France that they hemmed him in —or, rather, perhaps, that Martin Foy kneeled down, calmly looked over his muskets, and laid out his store of ammunition ready to his hand.

He laughed in gurgling murmurs, chuckling to himself as he made his preparations. A shot whistled past his ear. It came from behind one of the thousand boulders which he had passed on the way—natural fortresses from whence (had such been his desire) he might have slaughtered his pursuers with the ease and certainty of machinery.

But Martin Foy had come there to die.

On the bald scalp of the Larzac, ground flat by a thousand years of glacier ice, sparsely patched here and there with an inch deep fell of juniper and thyme, creeping plants that sprang from the cracks of the limestone, not a boulder, not a ridge of rock within a thousand yards—there, where he had lived, would he make an end.

"Now," he said, smiling triumphantly, "let them come. It is a fair challenge. I will try my marksmanship against theirs as soon as the light comes clearer."

Another bullet whistled by, skipping over the limestone like an angry bumble-bee. Then Martin Foy rose to his feet and shouted, because all his life he had disliked waste.

"Wait till the moon comes out from under that cloud yonder, and then have at you!"

The time appeared to pass slowly for all concerned. Martin Foy bit on a bullet and emptied a measure of powder into his hand. Then very carefully he put the grains back again.

"They keep their guns well enough, these Papists," he growled, "but I wish that fellow had given a touch

more oil to his trigger, and this powder-flask is infamously foul."

With incredible slowness the clouds moved off the face of the moon. Martin grew restless. Doubtless, he thought, his pursuers were creeping up nearer to him. Yet he could not see them. They might close in upon him with a rush ere he was aware. Well, he could be to the full as cunning as they. Let him think.

So upon the stillness of that terrible night of the hunting of a man there rose high and clear the Camisard chaunt called, "The Daughter of Jerusalem." Sad and wayward and wearyful it is at any time, but now heard under the stars, sung as a death-song by a madman and the slayer of his only child, it thrilled those listening to it, as if it had been the trumpet of the angel who in that Day shall stand one foot on sea and one on land:

"O Daughter of Jerusalem—thou who art destroyed!
Happy is he that rewardeth thee for thine iniquity!
Happy he that taketh thy little ones in their tenderness
And dasheth them against the stones!"

And this terrible chaunt was followed by the madman's laugh. Guided by the sound the hunters dashed in, but once more Martin Foy had baulked them. The place was empty, vague, silent. The murderer was not there.

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At last out of the cloud slid the moon. The madman was kneeling on one knee, his musket to his shoulder. Not in vain had he been accounted the best shot among the men of the Larzac, a company of fighters and hunters, all mighty before the Lord.

"Ah—there! There! Do you see him? There!"

Indeed, every man of them saw him clear in the chill

moonlight of the Larzac, grey and frost-filtered with the altitude.

But the quarry also saw his hunters, and with a sigh Sergeant-major Peyrat of the Maison Rouge rolled over and lay still—very still and with a bitten bullet in his side.

"One!" said Martin Foy—"No, two!" he corrected himself, not without a certain glee, as he marked the moonlight shine dully on the wet blade of his knife. All the time, up the sides of the Larzac, by the narrow defiles of the Dourbie, men were climbing—adventurous men, brave men, all eager to shed the blood of the murderer of their general's wife.

In an hour they had formed a circle almost complete about him, some lying on the scanty juniper, some crawling over the dwarf heath, or spread abroad upon the lavender and sage—sprawling, clinging, gliding, sliding hither and thither like lizards on hot rocks, all eager for the death of one man—a man who asked no better than to die. While there—out on the open waste, knelt Martin Foy—a figure of fear, hatless, his long grey hair clotted with sweat and blood, his clothing mere rags of tatters, his white teeth showing in the moonlight like those of a trapped wolf, now singing by snatches his Camisard psalms, now yelling and leaping in the mere joy of madness and the lust of blood.

Of all who were out upon the face of the Larzac that night, he alone made no attempt at concealment. He sought no shelter. He disdained alike rock-shelter and juniper clump. A grim black figure out on the waste, fear-compelling, the spent moon shedding a misty aureole about him, loading and firing as fast as he could send the powder and shot down the barrel, yelling in unison with the ring of his ramrod—that was Martin Foy, the mad Camisard, fighting his last

fight—the knife with his daughter's blood yet red on the haft, displayed on the pallid limestone before him.

And thus the man was hunted—a thousand against one.

And as Martin Foy loaded and fired, this one and that other, Sergeant-major Peyrat, young Theo de Banville, and Monsieur Bechet himself, fell over with the groan of the bullock poleaxed between the thills, and died—thinking it a light thing to die fighting for a woman like Yvette. the wife of the Maréchal de Montrevel.

And still as the Camisard fought he sang, lifting up his voice to the hill-silences, and caring not that by so doing he guided hundreds more to the place whereon he had chosen to die.

"BABYLON—BABYLON THE GREAT IS FALLEN: IS FALLEN—
UPON WHOSE FOREHEAD IS WRITTEN MYSTERY:
BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS,
AND OF ALL THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH!"

And then at the end of his song, with a mighty shout the madman rose to his feet and cried, "Come and slay—or ye will come too late. I saw, as it had been a daughter of my flesh, but no daughter of mine—a woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and lo! I slew her! Was it not well done?"

And at that moment, even as he cried aloud, he saw one come up breathless, having left his dead in other care to be made ready for her burial—the old soldier de Montrevel, his sword bright in his hand.

And as he came he saw his enemy, black against the illumined mist, loading and firing, with laughter and singing. So being the husband of the woman slain, and caring naught for the death that sprang towards every-one that advanced, he shouted, "Follow me to slay—

I am Nicholas de Baume—the husband of her whom the murderer slew ! "

And like a charging bull he rushed full at the single figure out there on the flat greyness of the limestone. Now Martin Foy had a loaded musket in his hand and the Maréchal de Montrevel was clear against the moon as he came towards him. The madman could have shot him dead as he had done so many others that night. But he had heard the word. A new idea flashed across his brain, now crystal clear, anon working like yeast.

" *Her husband !* " he shouted in a mighty voice. " If that be true then I, Martin Foy, have shed innocent blood. It is here upon this blade ! "

" Red to the haft ! " he cried as he caught it up in the pale glinting of the moon. " God of gods, let me bear the sin alone ! "

And with a hand sure and tried, he plunged the great Camisard knife, yet red with the blood of his daughter, deep into his own throat.

Selah—A Song in Antiphony.

Catinat the prophet and one Roland, called the Red, were standing at the door of the Protestant Temple in the village of La Cavalerie. The daily service was beginning. Within the psalms were being chaunted, and without the leaders, having matters to arrange for the safety of the defences, which were still being held to the death, spoke softly together.

"Jean Cavalier—what of him?" said Roland to the grim-featured old prophet.

His reply could not be heard, but from within came the chaunting of the Brethren of the Way at their daily service of praise!

> "Mine own familiar friend in whom I trusted,
> Which did eat of my bread,
> Hath lifted up his heel against me!"

Then changing to a softer measure the song went on:

> "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit,
> A broken and a contrite heart,
> Thou, O God, wilt not despise!"

"I have had a letter from our brother, that true man and father in Israel, Patrick Wellwood. Once more he is dividing the way to the soldiers who fight for the truth—even to those called the regiment of Ardmillan!"

Within the psalm was changed. The tune came stronger and more rejoicefully.

> "He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water,
> That bringeth forth his fruit in his season."

"And his daughter?" said Roland, rather more eagerly. "Verily, she was a shoot of a goodly tree—an herb of grace!"

"She is married happily and her husband is now Commandant of the same regiment — which, saveth Patrick Wellwood, is now no longer to be called Ardmillan's but Raith's foot—a name sufficiently strange to the ear. They are happy in each other and in their children. But, he adds, the wild man that was with them, hath gone to abide at a place called Keltonhill!"

And from within came the chorussed affirmation, the continuation of the Camisard's song.

"His leaf also shall not wither,
And whatever he doeth shall prosper."

* * * * * *

"And still," said Roland, "in spite of Jean Cavalier and his defections, we Brethren of the Way hold our defenced villages. The enemy hath not made an inroad. Nor shall our spirits ever be broken!"

"For that give God the glory!" quoth stout Catinat, uncovering devoutly.

And from within that little house of prayer, where of old the Templars had held their revels, came the solemn Doxology which closed the hill-folk's worship:

"As for me, Thou upholdest me in mine integrity
And settest me before Thy face for ever:
Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,
From everlasting and to everlasting! Amen and Amen!"

THE END.

[*Witnessed to be a True Tale, so far as man may write, the Eve of Malplacquet of the year* 1724, *in our House of Raith.*]

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